OUTDOORLAND

by Robert W. Chambers

Elizabeth Jansch

This Book belongs
to
Elizabeth Jansch
R. F. D. # 1,
Dansville, N. Y.

I recieved this book
when I was seven years
old. On my birthday
from Mom and Dad..

OUTDOORLAND

GERALDINE AND PETER ON THE RIVER-BANK

OUTDOORLAND
Stories for Children

by

ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

AUTHOR OF
"CARDIGAN," "THE MAID-AT-ARMS,"
"THE CONSPIRATORS," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED IN COLOR BY
REGINALD BIRCH
AND
ELIZABETH SHIPPEN GREEN

NEW YORK AND LONDON
HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
MCMXXIII

OUTDOORLAND

Copyright, 1902, 1903, 1904
By ROBERT W. CHAMBERS
Printed in the U. S. A.

E-X

CONTENTS

PAGE

OUTDOORLAND

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER I. The Milk-weed Butterfly . . . 15

" II. The Brook Trout 32

" III. The Green Frog 46

" IV. The Grass Snake 59

" V. The Robin 78

" VI. The Spider 88

RIVER-LAND

CHAPTER I. The Yellow Butterfly 109

" II. Sindbad the Grasshopper . . . 125

" III. Pete Tip-up 138

" IV. The Marsh-hawk 149

" V. In River-land 159

" VI. The Outlaw 176

" VII. The Wood-duck 189

ORCHARD-LAND

INTRODUCTION 203

The Woodchuck 212

The Dragon-Fly 227

The Blue-Jay 242

The Big Green Caterpillar 254

The Wasps 270

The Chipmunk 285

The Bat 297

Bedtime 308

ILLUSTRATIONS

Geraldine and Peter on the River Bank . . . . . *Frontispiece*

"'Oh, Peter! It's Calling, "Geraldine! Geraldine!"'" *Facing p.* 6

"And the Beautiful Butterfly Flew Up into the Sunshine" . " " 20

"'Oh, the Beautiful Fish,' Said Geraldine" . . . . " " 34

"'What Do You Know?' Inquired the Frog" . . . " " 46

"'Gewiss-s!' Hissed the Snake" . . . . . " " 62

"'Just Call Me Bob,' Said the Robin" . . . . . " " 78

"'Stuff and Rubbish!' Snapped the Spider" . . . . " " 94

"'Why, It Is a Whole Garden of Solid Yellow Butterflies!' Cried Peter" . . . . . " " 116

"'They Call Me Sindbad the Grasshopper'" . . . " " 130

"'Oh, Mrs. Pete, It Is the Most Wonderful Nest I Ever Saw!'" . . . . . " " 146

"The Hawk Soared Upward, Balanced on Broad, Grayish Wings" . . . . . " " 150

"'Why, We're Chasing All Kinds of Tiny Water Creatures,' Said the Whirligig" . . . . . " " 164

"'Are There Any Harmless Mosquitoes?' Asked Peter, Quietly" . . . . . " " 178

"'We Wood-ducks Are Experts in the Water'" . . . " " 194

"'I Thought I Heard a Noise Coming,' Said the Woodchuck" . . . . . " " 208

"'Don't Move,' Whispered Peter" . . . . . " " 228

"'Did You Make All That Noise?' Asked Peter" . . " " 244

"'You Will See a Moth Fluttering Against the Pane'" . " " 266

"'Peter,' Said Geraldine, 'There Is a Wasp on That Apple'" . . . . . " " 272

"'Oh, I Don't Mind,' said the Chipmunk" . . . . " " 288

"So the Children Took Hold of Hands" . . . . " " 298

OUTDOORLAND

A

STORY FOR CHILDREN

INTRODUCTION

GERALDINE and Peter sat on a bench in the orchard sharing a spelling-book between them; the French Governess sat on the grass, her broad back propped against a fat apple-tree, her spectacles low on her nose.

"B, I, - bi - OL - ol - O - o - GY - gy, Biology," said Peter and Geraldine in sleepy sing-song. Then they waited, eyes fixed on the next word in the spelling-book. But the French Governess said nothing; her spectacles slipped

Copyright, 1903, by Robert W. Chambers

lower on her nose, her head wagged.

"She's going to sleep again," whispered Geraldine.

"It isn't our fault," said Peter. "Spell the next word very softly. Now! Together!"

"You know that our spelling together always makes her sleepy. I think we ought to spell very loudly—"

"It is bad manners to speak loudly," said Peter.

The orchard was warm; the transparent green shadows spread a cool carpet under boughs that swept the grass.

"I choose that tree for my castle!" whispered Peter, closing his spelling-book without any noise. "Come on, Geraldine; she'll sleep till luncheon."

"We ought to keep on spelling, even if Mademoiselle is asleep; don't you think so?" asked Geraldine in a very low voice.

"That wouldn't be any fun," said Peter.

"But this is not fun, this is lessons," persisted Geraldine. "Anyway, I'm not to sit on the grass because it stains my frock, and Mademoiselle says that creepy things bite, and that whenever we are out, and I see a worm, you are to step on it—"

"I won't; I like worms," said Peter.

"Mademoiselle says they bite. Still, you need not step on them; I can run."

Peter sat down cross-legged under an apple-tree, nibbling grass tips and observing the sleeping Governess with speculative eyes.

"I wonder," he began—"I wonder how many things there are in the world?"

"What kinds?" asked Geraldine.

"Oh, all kinds of kinds."

Geraldine came and seated herself beside him, cross-legged, and looked carefully about in the grass for ants.

"There are so many kinds of things—like birds, and squirrels, and toads, and butterflies,

and fishes—so many, many things," continued Peter. "And I wonder why?"

"Shall I ask Mademoiselle," said Geraldine, with a guilty glance at the slumbering Governess.

"What's the use?" said Peter hastily. "She won't tell you. It's my opinion that she doesn't know, either."

"Oh, but she does know, of course!" cried Geraldine, "only, perhaps, all those things are not worth knowing about."

"I'll tell you what, Geraldine," said Peter, "I'm tired of knowing about all those things Indoors—all those nouns, and verbs, and arithmetics, and conjugations—I'd like to know what happens Outdoors—"

"Outdoors?" repeated Geraldine.

"Yes, out here in the grass under the trees—and down in the brook on the edge of the alders—and out there on that hill, and in the beech-woods over the hill, and—oh, everywhere Outdoors. Now, for instance, Geraldine, what

do you suppose lives in that hole in the ground; there just beside you?"

"Not anything alive?" said Geraldine, hastily gathering up her white skirts—"do you think so, Peter?"

"Who knows," replied Peter mysteriously. "Anyway, don't be afraid. Perhaps it's a squirrel, or a rabbit, or a fox, or a woodchuck, or a chipmunk, or—or a bat. Geraldine, why are you afraid of something every time you are Outdoors?"

"I'm not," said Geraldine; "I only find it tiresome watching for ants and spiders. How hot it is! how still! Listen."

"Suppose," said Peter, after a silence, "suppose that everything around us was alive and watching us."

Geraldine looked carefully about her, then shrugged her shoulders.

"It's all stupid and still; nothing but grass and trees."

"But," persisted Peter, "suppose the trees

could hear us—and see us—suppose they were all watching us now—like that humpy old apple-tree. What do you suppose they would think of us?"

"You can't frighten me," said Geraldine anxiously.

"I don't want to frighten you; anyway, if you are afraid there's Mademoiselle—"

"She's asleep."

"Well, she's there all the same. Now, suppose that humpy old apple-tree was listening to us with all its leaves—"

"*I am listening*," said a voice softly.

Peter started violently and took firm hold of Geraldine. Geraldine sat up very straight in the grass and held Peter's left arm tightly in both her hands.

"Geraldine," said Peter, trying not to choke —"I am very, very sorry to frighten you, but I believe that tree is—is alive."

"Everything's alive!" gasped Geraldine. "Oh, do you hear the hundreds of little voices

[See page 7

"'OH, PETER! IT'S CALLING, "GERALDINE! GERALDINE!"'"

all around us? Oh, Peter! It's the grass—and it's calling 'Geraldine! Geraldine!'"

"It—it is very funny," said Peter, with a loud gulp, "but I—I believe I don't care about sitting here any more."

"Children, children," whispered a voice, which was like a little breeze stirring the apple leaves.

"It means us," said Geraldine, in terror. "It's the apple-tree. Oh, Peter, come!"

"It's only a tree," quavered Peter, preparing to retreat, however. "It's only a humpy old apple-tree—and a crab-apple at that!"

"Be polite to it," whimpered Geraldine; "it's really much safer to be kind to it. Who knows but it has hundreds of friends all around us here Outdoors—"

"*I have,*" came the breezy voice, so gentle, so kindly, that Geraldine, who had jumped to her feet at the sound, stood still like a wild bird surprised by a caress in its own nest.

"Silly children," murmured the tree, "learn first of all that the world loves you."

Peter, with Geraldine's hand in his, stared wildly at the tree.

"Are you really speaking to us?" he asked, with a start at the sound of his own voice.

"I really am," said the apple-tree, and there came a sound of laughter among the leaves.

"You mustn't mind my leaves," said the apple-tree, waving its branches majestically; "they are young. They huddle together and whisper and giggle with the June breezes, and they are very curious to know about everything that goes on Indoors. Perhaps you can tell them what people do Indoors."

"I?" cried Peter, with a start.

"Certainly," said the tree.

"Oh, but I would much rather hear what you do *Out*doors!" said Peter. "I was just wishing that I knew—"

"We heard you," laughed the leaves, rustling delightedly.

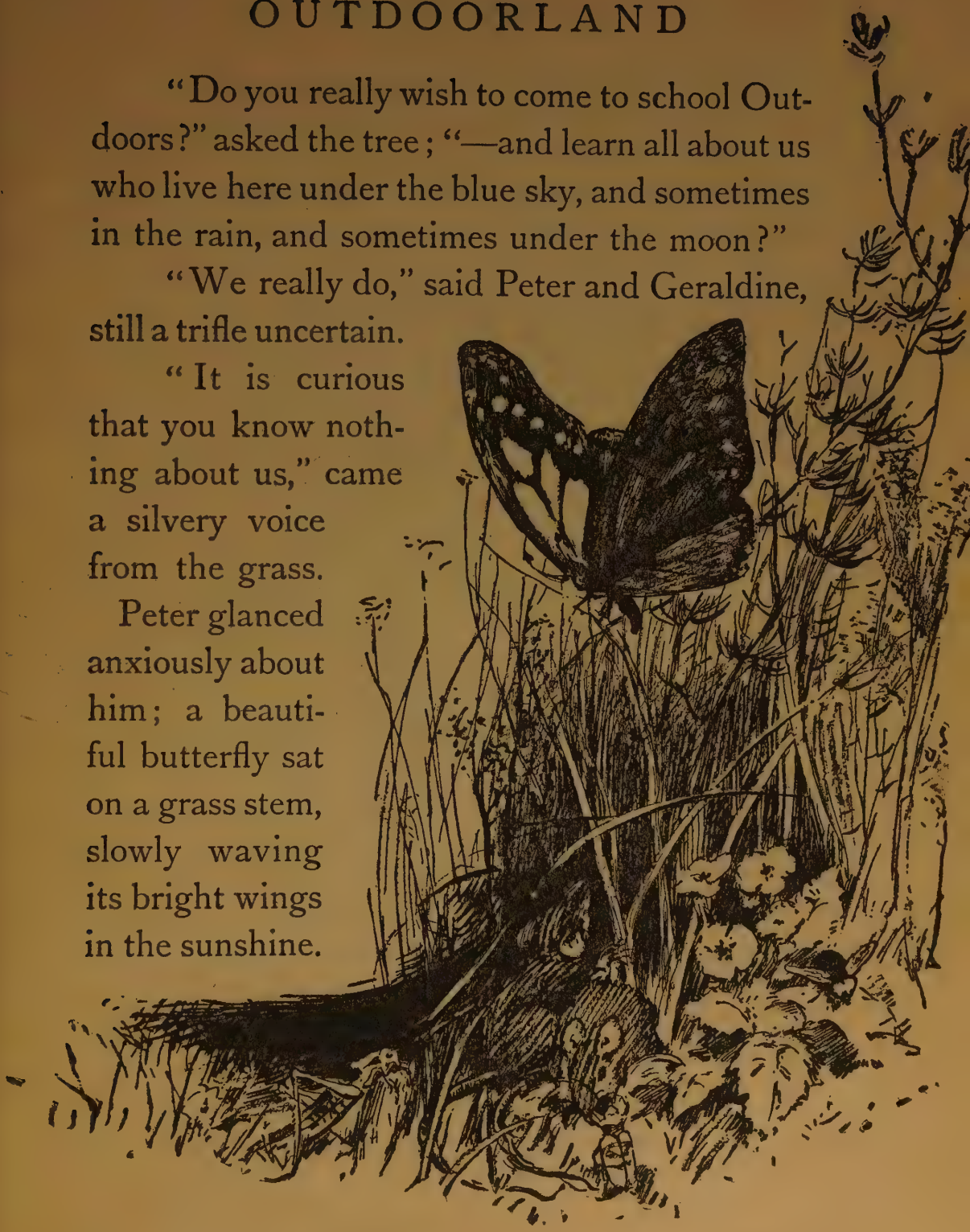
OUTDOORLAND

"Do you really wish to come to school Outdoors?" asked the tree; "—and learn all about us who live here under the blue sky, and sometimes in the rain, and sometimes under the moon?"

"We really do," said Peter and Geraldine, still a trifle uncertain.

"It is curious that you know nothing about us," came a silvery voice from the grass.

Peter glanced anxiously about him; a beautiful butterfly sat on a grass stem, slowly waving its bright wings in the sunshine.



"Did *you* say that?" asked Peter.

"I certainly did," replied the butterfly, "and I will repeat it; 'it's curious that you know nothing whatever about us,' and particularly me. I am the most interesting object in the world."

"I'm interesting too," said the apple-tree; "a great big, healthy, fruitful tree like me to come from a seed—isn't that interesting? Isn't it?"

"Yes, but I was a caterpillar once," observed the butterfly, slowly waving its wings.

"A—a worm!" cried Geraldine.

"Of course," said the butterfly carelessly. "But I didn't feed on *him*"—pointing one slender feeler at the apple-tree.

"As a caterpillar you preferred milk-weed," said the apple-tree politely.

"I did," replied the butterfly, "but I have no doubt that your leaves are delicious. When I was a caterpillar, the Yellow Swallow-tail butterfly, who was at that time also a caterpillar, told me that for a steady diet there was nothing like a good smooth apple leaf."

"You are very kind," said the tree, quivering with pleasure.

"Not at all," replied the butterfly, waving its wings airily. "Now if these children from Indoors will take a seat under your leaves, I will give them a few moments this morning before I breakfast on those newly budded thistles along the hillside yonder."

"You hear what my friend, the milk-weed butterfly, says," remarked the apple-tree. "Sit down, children. He has kindly consented to give you a few moments of his valuable time."

"You may well say valuable," said the butterfly; "I only stay here till October; I'm not like my friend, the Camberwell Beauty, who hides away in some crack or cranny during the winter and comes out to play in the first warm sunshine of March or April. And I don't care either, for my silken clothes would be all faded and mussed. Sit down, you little Indoor children, and I'll tell you all about myself."

"First," suggested Geraldine timidly, "if you

please I should like to know if the grass is alive."

"Of course the grass is alive," came back a chorus of tiny voices.

"Then where are we to sit?" exclaimed Geraldine anxiously.

"On us—we don't mind!" came the bewildering chorus.

"It strengthens their roots and blades," observed the apple-tree. "You are really shockingly ignorant, even for Indoor folk. Haven't you ever seen your gardener rolling the lawn?"

"We thought he did it to crush the worms," said Geraldine—"oh, I beg your pardon!" she cried, looking guiltily at the butterfly, who sat on his grass blade quivering with indignation.

"It's all very well," he said, "to call a caterpillar a worm, and when I was a caterpillar I was used to it. But to talk about crushing caterpillars—it makes me wish I were a dragonfly and lived half my life in the water!"

"The children don't mean it; they don't

understand," said the apple-tree pleasantly, its upper branches swimming in a deliciously cool current of air.

"Please, little Indoor children, sit down on us; it strengthens our joints," whispered the grass.

Very gingerly Peter and Geraldine sat down, saying, "Please excuse us for sitting on you." The butterfly rose in the air, sailed about for a moment or two like a great red maple leaf, and finally settled on the tip of Geraldine's forefinger.

"Are you flattered or afraid?" demanded the butterfly.

"Fl-flattered," quavered Geraldine.

"Very well," said the butterfly, much gratified, "then I'll begin."

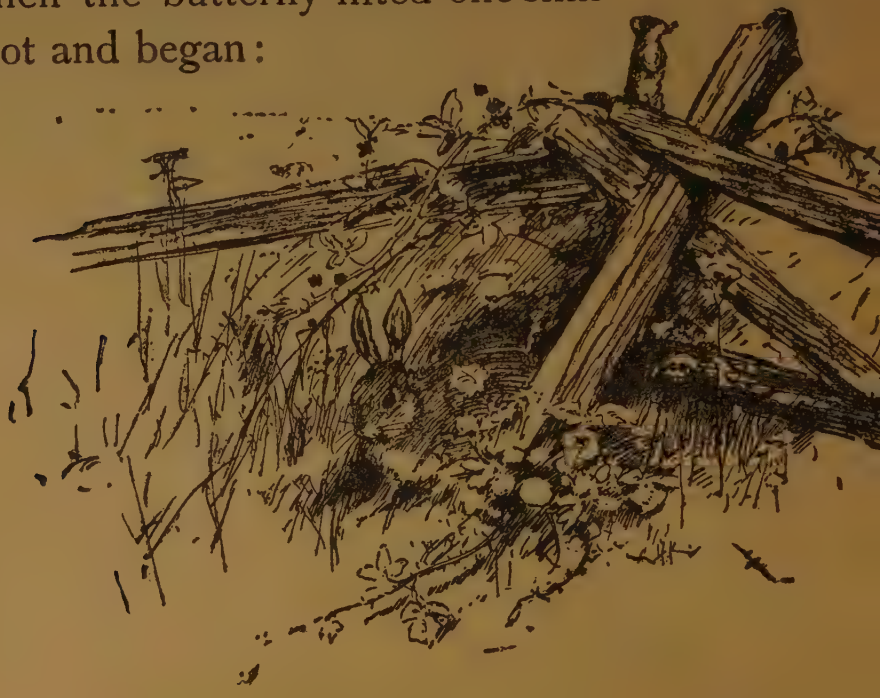
But before the butterfly began the apple-tree said:

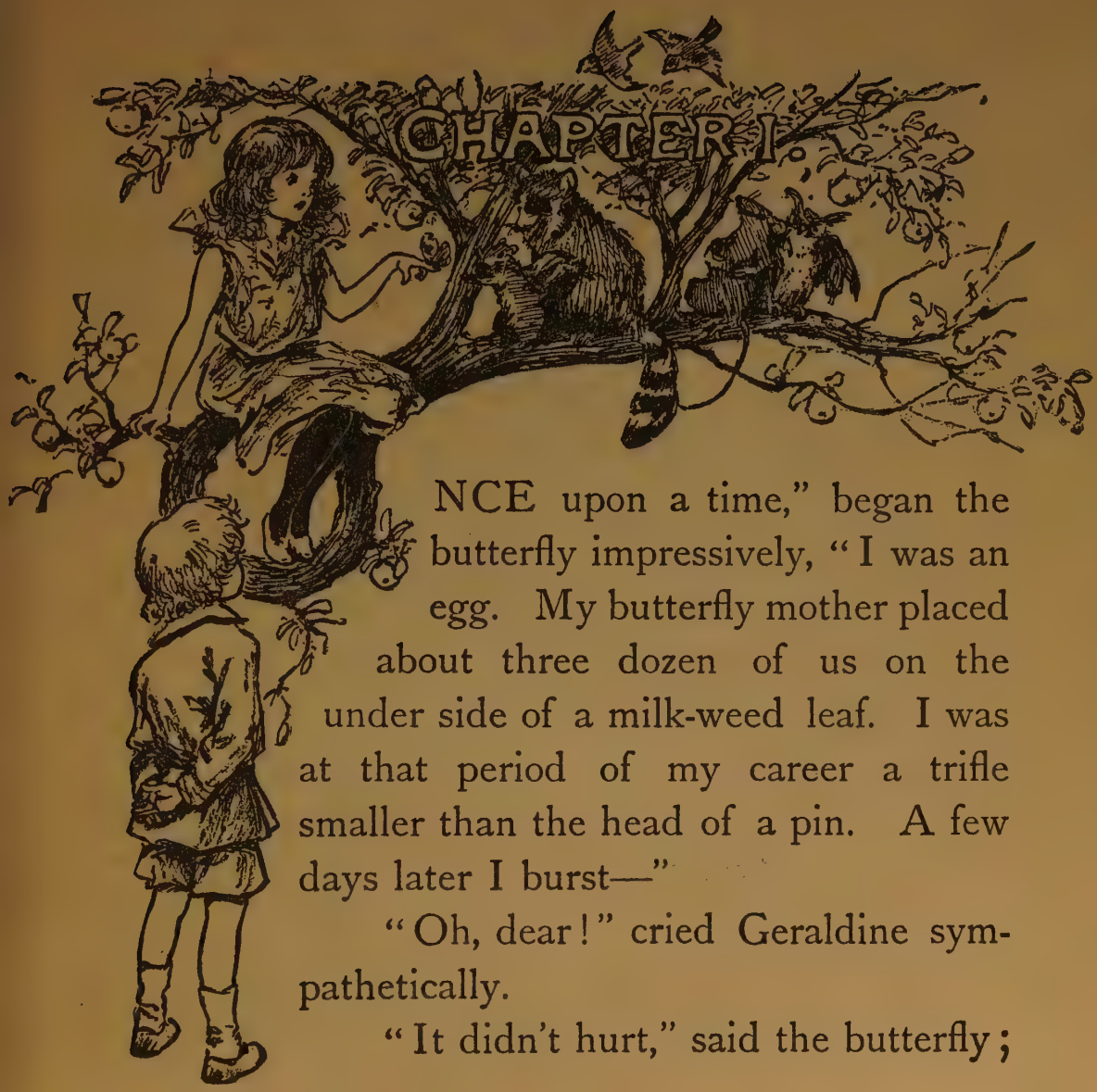
"Children, you must know first of all that we all love you. We trees watch you and love you; all the little folk of Outdoors love you and long for your love in return—yes, all—the little

chipmunk yonder, folding his forepaws over his white stomach; the rabbit, listening to you under the blackberry vines along the fence; the robin nesting in my top branches; the speckled trout lying like a shadow in the brook below us—the bushes, the trees, the grass—all are alive and all love you and long for your love. Will you give us your love?"

"Yes," whispered Geraldine and Peter.

Then the butterfly lifted one slim fore-foot and began:





CHAPTER I

NCE upon a time," began the butterfly impressively, "I was an egg. My butterfly mother placed about three dozen of us on the under side of a milk-weed leaf. I was at that period of my career a trifle smaller than the head of a pin. A few days later I burst—"

"Oh, dear!" cried Geraldine sympathetically.

"It didn't hurt," said the butterfly;

"I was only an egg, remember. And, as I have already observed, I burst my tiny shell and—guess what came out of that shell?"

"Why, *you* did," ventured Peter politely.

"Yes—I came out, but, bless your hearts, you little Indoor children would never have known me. I had no wings. But I had a body, and sixteen legs, and a splendid appetite. I was, in fact, a caterpillar—very small, it is true, but still a caterpillar."

"*You* a caterpillar?" exclaimed Geraldine excitedly.

"Certainly," replied the butterfly, calmly closing his brilliant wings over his back and indolently uncoiling a long, thin tongue. "All butterflies come from caterpillars; didn't you know it?"

"No," said Geraldine.

"Didn't know it?" repeated the butterfly in astonishment; "what do you study in school?"

"Books," said Geraldine faintly—"but

they're not about you; they're about men."

"Poor trash! Poor trash!" said the butterfly; "men have only two legs; I have six legs; when I was a caterpillar I had sixteen; when I was an egg I had none!

"Goodness, how I did eat when I first became a caterpillar! I ate and ate until I burst—"

"Oh, dear!" cried Geraldine sympathetically.

"It didn't hurt, child," said the butterfly; "I had eaten too much and my skin became too tight. So I went off by myself and stood on the under side of a leaf for a few hours, and then I quietly burst my old skin and came out in a beautiful brand-new skin. I did it four times in three months. My! What a pretty skin I had; green with yellow and black stripes. And all day long I ate and ate."

"What?" ventured Peter.

"Milk-weed, toujours milk-weed," replied

the butterfly. "I had a pair of jaws which worked sideways like scissors, and I fed on the edge of the leaf, eating it down to the tough old mid-rib."

"Did you ever think," asked Peter, "that the early bird might catch you?"

"Oh, no," said the butterfly carelessly; "you see, *every* kind of insect is not good for birds; and I am one of those kinds that give birds awful pains. So the robins and bluebirds only looked at me sideways and let me alone. Now, I have a relative who resembles me, and he's good to eat, the birds say. Poor fellow! it must be an awful thing for him to know that he's good to eat. But there's a joke to it, after all; because he looks so much like me that the birds can't tell us apart; they're afraid to touch either of us just because I am not good to eat. But, to resume my story. When I had been a caterpillar for nearly ten weeks I began to feel a most curious feeling—"

"Had you been eating green apples?" asked Peter.

"I never eat apples," said the butterfly.

"You ought to try mine," observed the old apple-tree eagerly; "I'm grafted with 'Pound Sweetings.'"

"I will," said Geraldine, looking up at a very large apple.

The cultivated tree boughed and dropped a large "Pound Sweeting" into Geraldine's lap, and she and Peter took bites out of it while the butterfly resumed his autobiography.

"Yes, I had a most peculiar sensation; I seemed to want to get away from the other caterpillars and be alone and think and wait—"

"Wait for what?" asked Peter, with his mouth full of sweet apple.

"I didn't know what I was waiting for," said the butterfly; "I lost my appetite, too. It fairly made me ill to see the other cater-

pillers eat; so I left them and went off by myself.

"After a few hours a terrible restlessness seized me; I walked down the stem of the milk-weed and into the grass, and began wandering around, looking for I knew not what.

"About an hour before sunset I espied a fence; something impelled me to climb up one of the rails and sit on the under side of it. There I remained quietly all night; but in the morning I had a strong desire to hang by my two hind feet. It was an absurd and indecorous performance, but the craving to hang head downwards grew stronger and stronger."

"I often have it," observed Peter, "and I do it."

"Does anything strange happen to you?" inquired the butterfly.

"Ye–es, sometimes," admitted Peter.

"AND THE BEAUTIFUL BUTTERFLY FLEW UP INTO THE SUNSHINE"

"What?" demanded the butterfly, jerking its wings nervously.

"I'm spanked," said Peter simply.

"Is that all?" asked the butterfly.

"All?" cried Peter. "What more is there?"

"I'll tell you what happened to *me* when I hung head downwards by *my* hind feet," replied the butterfly. "Listen, you little Indoor children: I first spun a tiny web on the under side of the fence, just a little round spot of silk, not bigger than that freckle on Peter's nose.

"Then I carefully entangled my two hind feet in the web, and when I felt I was firmly hooked in—for there were several very small hooks on my hind feet—I let go with my remaining fourteen legs, and there I swung, head downwards—"

"Until you grew dizzy! I know!" exclaimed Geraldine, pausing in the act of biting her side of the apple.

"Yes, I was a trifle dizzy," admitted the butterfly, "but I had no idea of letting go. Beautiful dreams came to me. I dreamed first that I was eating milk-weed; then I dreamed I had wings and was floating far up among the clouds with the birds; and then—and then—"

"What happened?" exclaimed Peter, much interested.

"I burst," said the butterfly calmly.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" cried Geraldine, rocking to and fro.

"It didn't hurt," said the butterfly; "it never hurt me to burst. So I burst open; and out through the skin of my back came a beautiful jewel, about the size of a sparrow's egg, but a little different in shape, and of an exquisite pale, translucent green color, all spotted with gilt.

"I was a chrysalis."

"A chrysalis?" repeated the children; "what is a chrysalis?"

"Different kinds of butterflies have different chrysalides," said the butterfly; "mine was a smooth, little, pear-shaped thing, without eyes or legs or mouth. There I swung from the small spot of silk; I wriggled a little to cast off the thin, dry, transparent skin of the caterpillar which clung to me; but when I was freed from it I remained motionless, like a tiny lacquered mummy inlaid with gold. Good gracious, how beautiful I was!"

"If you had no mouth, how could you breathe?" asked Peter.

"I breathed through little holes in my sides—holes about as big as the point of a pin. I breathed the same way when I was a caterpillar, and I breathe that way now. It is a very good way to breathe," said the butterfly impatiently; "do you know a better way?"

Peter said nothing.

"I breathe through my nose," ventured Geraldine timidly; "mother wants me to."

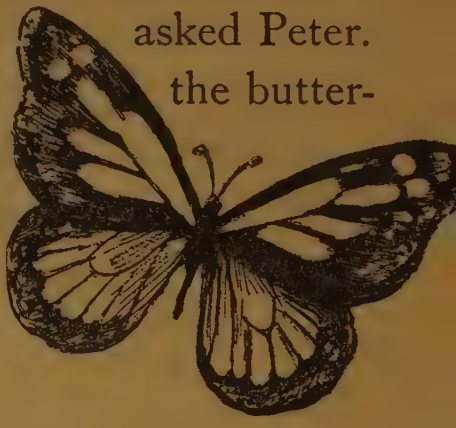
"I don't object," said the butterfly; "there are hundreds of ways to breathe. I knew a grasshopper who breathed through his hind legs."

Peter said nothing; Geraldine looked down at her legs thoughtfully; the butterfly resumed his memoirs.

"I hung there under the fence for nearly two weeks. I did not find it stupid, either; something extraordinary was going on inside me all the while, and I had more dreams—lovely dreams of sailing about in the sunshine on a pair of wings."

"Did you ever dream you were falling out of bed?" asked Peter.

"Once," said the butterfly, "I dreamed I fell off a bed of petunias and landed in a spider-web."



Geraldine shuddered; the butterfly continued his story:

"Then one day I began to change color; I became darker and darker, first gray, then blue, then a sort of thunder-cloud tint, and lastly a deep, sombre, ruddy purple.

"My gilt spots disappeared; my skin, my beautiful pea-green skin, began to loosen and grow brittle. Then, one morning, just as the first warm sunbeam fell on me, I burst—"

"Oh, dear! Again?" cried poor Geraldine.

"Yes, again—for the last time," said the butterfly triumphantly. "My back split open, and out of the transparent shell of the chrysalis crawled a tiny, damp, dark little object, all body and legs and feelers. It was I!"

"You!" exclaimed the children in astonished chorus. "Where were your wings?"

"In two little wet, baggy bunches on my back," said the butterfly. "You must know, you little Indoor children, that my wings are

the most wonderful and important things in the world; wonderful because they are filled with veins full of butterfly blood, important because they belong to me.

"So, as soon as I crawled out of my chrysalis I began to wave my tiny folded wings and to pump butterfly blood into all the veins. My! How I did pump! Slowly my wings began to expand and grow beautiful; in two hours my wings were pumped up to the size you now see, and I sat luxuriously there on the fence, soaking in the hot sunshine and watching the world out of my highly complex eyes. I have a fine bunch of eyes; did you know it?"

"I only see two," said Peter.

"Each eye is full of little eyes," said the butterfly proudly. "I have six legs, but all butterflies have that exact number of legs, no more, no less, so I have nothing to boast of as far as the number of my legs is concerned.

My food is dew and honey and nice little tidbits of moisture which you cannot see for all your enormous eyes, but which I can make a hearty meal of.

"I take my food through a long, slim tongue or tube — which is really double-barrelled, and which I carry rolled up until I need it to thrust into the depths of some honeyed flower."

"I take medicine through a tube," observed Peter.

"I suck lemonade through a straw," said Geraldine, "and I like to do it."

"I suppose you are trying to imitate me," said the butterfly indulgently. "Ah, well, courage, you little Indoor children; we all cannot be born butterflies!"

"What will you do when winter comes?" asked Peter.

"Go South," said the butterfly, lazily waving his wings. "I am, I believe, the only

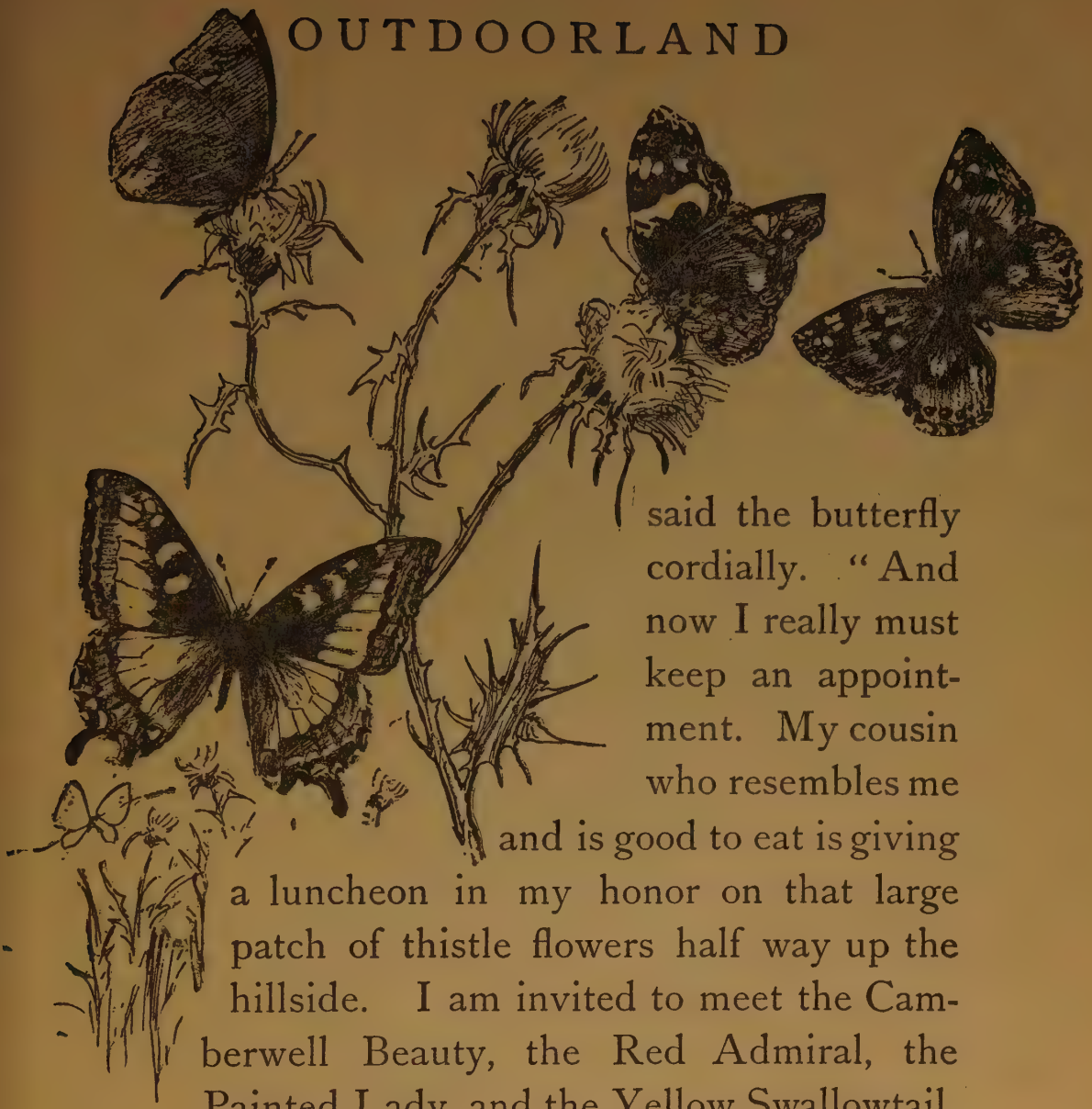
kind of butterfly that migrates—that is, goes South in the autumn to avoid the winter—like the birds, you know."

"What do the other kinds of butterflies do?" asked Geraldine anxiously.

"Oh, some of them hide away in cracks, like my friend, the Camberwell Beauty; some hasten away to the butterfly heaven, where we all go sooner or later. But we all marry first, and we have such a pretty honeymoon. And then our sweethearts place a lot of tiny eggs under the leaves, so that, when summer comes again, our children can be as happy as we have been. Truly, it would be a most dreadful thing if we forgot to make provision for our children. Think what a lonely world it would be without butterflies!"

"It *would* be lonely," admitted Peter and Geraldine politely.

"You are very kind to say so, and you are remarkably intelligent for Indoor children,"



said the butterfly cordially. "And now I really must keep an appointment. My cousin who resembles me and is good to eat is giving a luncheon in my honor on that large patch of thistle flowers half way up the hillside. I am invited to meet the Camberwell Beauty, the Red Admiral, the Painted Lady, and the Yellow Swallowtail, so you see I really ought to be going. Good-by, you little Indoor children; take your lemonade

through straws, and perhaps—perhaps some day you may turn into butterflies!"

And the beautiful red and amber butterfly flew up into the sunshine and sailed majestically away across the breezy hillside.

Peter and Geraldine watched him until he dwindled to a brilliant floating speck and was lost far out in the sunshine.

"Oh, dear," said Geraldine, "he did tell such wonderful stories! I do wish he'd come back and tell us something else about Outdoorland."

"Outdoorland is full of splendid story-tellers," said the apple-tree; "why don't you ask the trout in the stream yonder?"

"Would *he* tell us stories?" asked Geraldine.

"Fish stories," said the apple-tree; "they're the most exciting kind of stories. But you must go very carefully and quietly to the water's edge. No stamping with your

feet; no noise. My old friend the trout is very timid, and the slightest shock to his nerves will send him darting away under the bank to hide for hours. Wait; I'll tell the dragon-fly to notify the trout that he is to expect visitors."

A large, glittering dragon-fly, which had been sunning his wings on an apple twig, consented to fly down to the water's edge and inform the trout that visitors from Indoors were about to pay him a call. Peter and Geraldine waited in breathless expectation until the dragon-fly returned with a curious message from the trout; but to hear what that message was, you must turn to the next chapter.

CHAPTER II.

"He wants to know," said the dragon-fly, hovering just under Peter's freckled nose—"he wants to know whether you own a fish-pole."

"No," said Peter; "I am not to have a fish-pole until I am old enough to keep the hooks out of my fingers."

"Very well," said the dragon-fly, alighting on Geraldine's little finger, "then the trout will

be kind enough to answer any questions you ask him."

Geraldine had started and uttered a soft little "O-oh!" when the dragon-fly alighted on her finger.

"You—you don't sew up people's ears, do you?" she asked, after a moment.

"Nonsense," said the dragon-fly irritably; "your Governess told you that, didn't she? Of course—the same old story about my beautiful blue and green body resembling a darning-needle. It is humiliating—it is worse!—it is partly true; my body does glitter like a needle, sometimes; but on my word of honor I carry no sting in my tail. I'm nothing to be afraid of; I'm a beneficial insect, for I breakfast, lunch, dine, and sup on mosquitoes. Tell that to your Governess the next time a mosquito bites her."

"I will," said Geraldine soothingly, as the dragon-fly gave a disgusted buzz.

"It would be only fair to me," said the

dragon-fly resentfully, darting off after a mosquito.

"Before you go to see the trout," whispered the apple-tree, "let me offer you another apple—a red one this time;" and with a rustle of leaves, the tree dropped a bright red apple into Geraldine's lap.

"It's grafted fruit," said the tree proudly; "some time I will tell you how a tree can have two kinds of apples. But now you must go down to the brook on tiptoe—softly, children—for the trout is waiting to tell you all about a sporting life under water."

Peter took Geraldine's hand, and together they walked noiselessly through the deep orchard grass, down to where the brown brook widened out between two willows into a shallow pool.

A clear, tinkling voice greeted them; at first they thought it was the liquid music of the waterfall just below.

"'OH, THE BEAUTIFUL FISH,' SAID GERALDINE"

"It must be the trout," whispered Peter.

"It is," said the trout in the same crystalline voice. "Sit down; take off your shoes and stockings and let your dusty feet trail in the water."

"I should very much like to do it," said Geraldine, peering about in vain for the fish.

"Then do it," said the trout, sailing out from under the bank and lazily resting in the centre of the little golden pool.

"I see you!" cried Peter.

"So do I," said Geraldine, stripping off her shoes and stockings; "oh, the beautiful fish!"

And now, when the children had taken a seat on the mint-covered bank and rested their feet in the cool sands which lay shining under the shallow water, the trout slowly turned toward them.

"You may well call me a beautiful fish," he said calmly; "I am. I weigh a quarter of a pound and I am eight inches long."

"I weigh forty-five pounds," said Peter.

"It is your misfortune," said the trout; "you can never hope to live in this brook, because there's not enough water for a forty-five-pound fish."

"I'm a boy, not a fish," began Peter, but the trout dismissed the idea with a wave of his fins.

"A detail, a detail," he said. "If you are not a fish you must be a pollywog; but it really doesn't matter. The important thing for you to do is to sit perfectly still and make no noise while I very kindly tell you all about the most interesting thing in the world."

"What is that?" asked Geraldine.

"Myself," replied the trout pleasantly. And he began:

"My mother was a very beautiful trout, small of head, square-tailed, sleek and pretty, and weighed, I believe, nearly half a pound.

"Of course, her colour was not as beautiful as my father's colour, but the red spots on her

sides were bright as rubies, and the blue spots as blue as violets, and she was much admired among trout.

"I myself began life as an egg — a very tiny egg, about as large as the head of a very small pin. There were about two hundred of us eggs in a little hole in the bottom-sands under the water.

"My mother carefully covered us over with silvery sand, and there we lay, snug and cool, with the delicious water running over our bed-quilt of sand."

"Didn't you catch cold in bed?" asked Geraldine.

"No," said the trout; "how could we?"

"I suppose you kept all the windows shut," suggested Peter; "so you were never in a draught."

"Now, how could there be a draught where there were no doors or windows?" demanded the trout impatiently.

"But—but you say you were in bed," insisted Peter. "Beds are in rooms."

"We were in a spawning bed," said the trout, "and if you don't know what that kind of bed is, I'm sorry for you."

"We don't know much about antique furniture," admitted Geraldine, "but our mother does."

The trout yawned, settled a little lower in the water, and continued his story:

"We were all hatched at the same time—and I admit that we were a funny family. I, like all my brothers and sisters, was so tiny that it mortifies me to recall how small such a trout as I am could have been.

"And that was not all; every one of us had a most ridiculous little sac attached to our bodies, and we carried it around with us, totally unconscious of the absurd figures we cut.

"Little by little, however, the sac disappeared, and in a month or two we were the prettiest family of little trout you ever saw.

"We were born timid. Afraid of the big fish, we stayed far up the brook in little pools too small for big fish to swim in. And, dear me! what good times we did have chasing each other, leaping clear out of water to take our air-baths, rushing madly up-stream, racing down-stream, jumping at every little fly or gnat that hovered near the surface of our pool!"

"What did you eat?" asked Peter.

"Insects," said the trout.

"When it rained, and the big drops washed caterpillars and beetles and flies off the leaves and into the brook, we ate so much that for a few hours after we could scarcely swallow another morsel.

"Then, as we grew bigger, we came farther and farther down-stream, venturing into the deeper pools, but always keeping a wary eye on the bigger fish."

"Why?" asked Geraldine.

"Big fish eat little fish," said the trout.

"I shall never forget my first encounter with MAN!" he went on. "I was lying, half asleep, in a pool a little way up-stream, lazily watching the surface of the water for a stray fly, when suddenly I saw a beautiful plump angleworm fall into the pool.

"I made a dart for the worm, but a larger trout, who had been lying under the bank, got there first. I saw his jaws close on the worm, then, to my amazement, something seemed to jerk him; he struggled, splashed, and shot up out of the water into the air.

"'My! What a high jump!' I thought, and waited for him to come down again. And while I was waiting, my thoughts were distracted by seeing another plump angleworm fall into the pool.

"Instantly I made a rush for it, and at the same moment something nearly jerked my head off and a sharp steel hook pierced my upper jaw.

"Frantic with fright, I struggled to get

away, but I was lifted out of the water and hung swinging in the air, gasping, wriggling, and nearly beside myself with terror.

"Then I heard a voice say, 'Oh, it's only a little one; let it go.'

"'No,' said another voice; 'it's a six-inch trout. I'll keep it.' And a boy took hold of me and drew out the hook.

"How I did it I never knew, but, like a flash, I slipped between his fingers and fell plump back into the brook, with his cry of disappointment ringing out above me.

"But I scarcely heard it; I rushed under the shadowy bank and lay there gasping, gulping, and astonished."

"But," said Geraldine pitifully, "didn't your mouth smart?"

"No," said the trout; "you see, all around my mouth are strong bands of gristle, in which there are no nerves. It didn't hurt me any more than it hurts you when your hair is cut.

"But it was a lesson; I am a very different fish now. When I hear the sound of a human footstep jarring the bank above me, I hide; and I wouldn't come out of my retirement for all the plump angleworms or grasshoppers in the world. Did the dragon-fly give you my message?"

"Oh, yes," said Peter, "but I haven't a fish-pole."

"You couldn't catch me if you had," said the trout, waving his tail disdainfully; "you might catch common stupid minnows or sunfish, but you couldn't catch me. Why, it's an art to catch me; even Indoor folk admit that I certainly am the cleverest fish that breathes."

"Do you breathe?" asked Geraldine, surprised.

"Breathe? Of course."

"You breathe water, don't you?" asked Peter, with a superior smile at his sister.

"Water? *I* breathe water? Nonsense! I breathe air just as you do. Don't you know

that the water is full of air—very tiny particles of air? Well, then, you see my gills, don't you? They are like little rows of sieves—they sift the air out of the water into my lungs, and I breathe as good air as you do. Haven't you ever seen those stupid goldfish, that Indoor folk keep in glass globes, come up to the top of the water? Well, that is because the air in the water is exhausted and they need more air. If fresh water, full of fresh air, is not given them, they cannot live."

Presently Geraldine asked: "How high can you jump?"

"I can get over a fifteen-foot waterfall," said the trout proudly. "When I'm bigger I'll go and live in the swift river, where I can do some fancy jumping among the falls and rapids."

The children watched the fish; the pink gills slowly swelled, relaxed, and swelled; the mouth opened and shut continually.

"A trout must remember many things," said

the fish lazily; "he must remember that there are many Indoor people who are always trying to catch him; he must look out for a bird called a kingfisher, who darts over the stream and plunges into the water to seize the careless fish; he must beware of a dark, furry animal called a mink, who swims under water as fast as a fish; he must avoid very large fish of his own kind, who might attack him if very hungry; he—"

"What a terrible life you lead!" cried Geraldine, full of sympathy.

"Not at all," said the trout; "I'm the smartest being in the world, and I have only to keep my wits about me to live a long and happy life. Good-by!"

"But I want to ask you so many questions!" cried Peter.

"Ask the frog," said the trout; "he is willing to talk until he's hoarse, but I've said all I'm going to say to-day. Good-by."

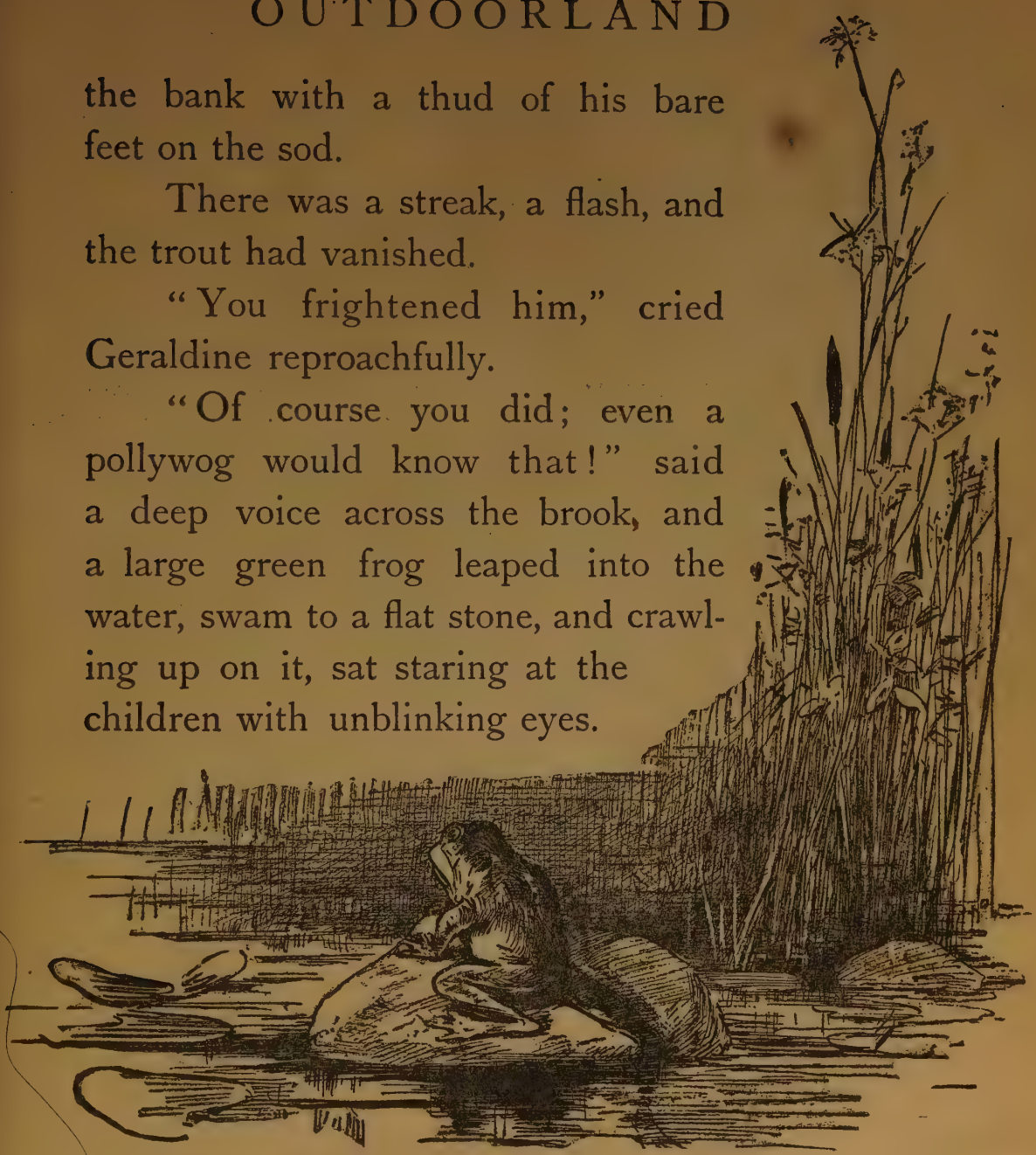
"But I—" began Peter, jumping up on

the bank with a thud of his bare feet on the sod.

There was a streak, a flash, and the trout had vanished.

"You frightened him," cried Geraldine reproachfully.

"Of course you did; even a pollywog would know that!" said a deep voice across the brook, and a large green frog leaped into the water, swam to a flat stone, and crawling up on it, sat staring at the children with unblinking eyes.



CHAPTER III.

IF you are polite enough to appreciate a good story," said the frog, huddling himself into a wet heap, "I can tell you a dozen."

"Are they all good stories?" asked Peter doubtfully.

"Every one of them," replied the frog, "because they're all about frogs. I object to any other kind of story."

"Oh," said Geraldine, very much disappointed, "I know all about frogs."

"What do you know?" inquired

"'WHAT DO YOU KNOW?' INQUIRED THE FROG"

the frog eagerly. "Tell me all you know—even if it takes weeks and weeks to tell it. I am a frog; nothing that concerns frogs is uninteresting to me."

Geraldine shook her head. "All I know is that frogs sit in puddles and their hind legs kick when they're swimming."

"Is that all you know?" asked the frog in deep disgust.

"Is there anything more to know?" inquired Peter. "You're not good to eat, you know—"

"My hind legs," shouted the frog in a passion, "are delicious when broiled! I am eagerly sought after by every pickerel in the river below here. Why, I'm such a delicacy, that sometimes those pickerel come poking their long, sharp snouts up the brook here, just to try and catch me napping. Ask the trout—he knows. And I half suspect he'd like to take a bite at me too, if he were bigger."

"Suppose," began Peter, "I caught you and put you on a hook, could—could I—do you believe I could catch a big pickerel with you?"

"I haven't a doubt of it," said the frog with a loud sob. "I'm probably the most delicate mouthful in the entire world."

"Does it sadden you to know that you are so good to eat?" asked Geraldine with ready sympathy.

"Yes—in a way. But it is a kind of proud sadness, and I can bear it. There is only one thing in this world that is really hard to bear."

"What is that?" asked Peter.

"Guess," said the frog.

"Being speckled?" ventured Geraldine, who had two tiny freckles on her nose. The frog was deeply offended.

"Do you refer to the exquisite marking of my skin?" he demanded. "For if you do—"

"No, no!" cried Peter; "you mean that your voice is gritty—"

"Stop!" said the frog sternly. "My voice is worn because I sing in German, but I am proud to have the rags of a once magnificent voice."

After this rebuke the children said nothing more; the frog sulked for a while. Presently, however, he snapped at a tiny fly, missed it, leaped into the air, caught it, and landed in the water with a splash.

Floating in a still pool, half submerged, the frog watched the children out of his changeless, unblinking eyes.

"I'll tell you what is hardest to bear in this world," he said at length. "It is the knowledge that you were once a tadpole—a soft, legless, mushy tadpole!"

"But I was not a tadpole!" began Peter.

"Oh, nobody cares what you were," said the frog indifferently. "I was a tadpole, and that's all that matters."

"You ought to be glad that you were not an egg," said Geraldine.

"I was an egg," said the frog in a low, mortified voice; "I wasn't going to tell you that."

"You! An egg!"

"One—small—egg!"

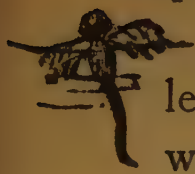
"Oh, dear!" cried Geraldine; "everything seems to have been an egg."

The frog clambered up on the bank beside Peter and squatted down in the long grass.

"My parents," said the frog, "were exceedingly beautiful and very musical. We all spoke German in the family—it is our native language—and although we know it ruins our voices, we make it a point of honor to speak it until our throats are torn to shreds. My cousin, the tree frog, is a frivolous creature, who trills French opera all night; but we solid people of the bulrushes scorn to save our voices at the expense of our patriotism. I'm as proud of my ruined voice as an old soldier is of a wooden leg."

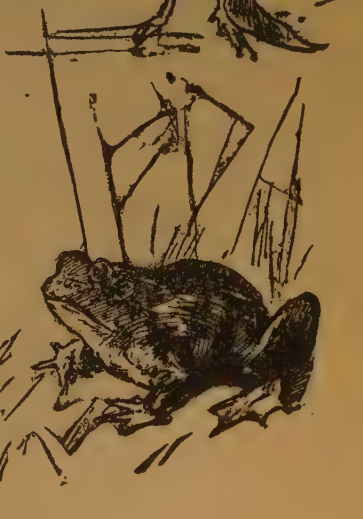
Peter, much impressed, listened solemnly.

"When I was hatched," continued the frog, "I was unpleasantly soft and shaped like a peanut. I had two little eyes, a mouth tucked away under my chin, and a leaf-like tail. And all day long I wriggled in the water."



"Didn't you eat?" asked Geraldine.

"Yes, after a fashion. I sucked up nourishment from the mud. Often and often I saw the big, green pickerel floating close by me, and then I would wriggle away, frightened nearly out of my wits. But I soon found out that no fish would take the trouble to eat a tadpole, so I used to lie on the bottom—mud—and stare at the great fish sailing overhead.



"I sometimes saw my beautiful mother, squatting on a lily-pad, catching flies in the sunshine, but she never paid the slightest attention to me or to my brothers and sisters. Sometimes we would all get together on the bottom—slime—of the pond and ask each other why we were born of such beautiful parents, only to grow up into soft, fishy, legless creatures, despised and shunned by all the inhabitants of the pond. How could it be possible that we were the children of that elegantly mottled lady-frog up there in the sunshine?

"I was certainly unhappy; the pickerel stared at me in silent contempt, the sunfish pretended to think I was good to eat, and then fled from me with every mark of disgust; even the little shiners came in shoals to jeer at me, and called me a worm to my very face."

"Did you have a face?" asked Peter.

"Two eyes and a mouth—not much of a face," said the frog.

"It was awful. I began to believe that I was a worm, after all. I grew heavy and fat and slothful; I had no ambition left; I went off by myself and brooded in the mud."

"Perhaps you had malaria," suggested Geraldine.

"Perhaps," said the frog.

"When the kingfisher dashed past through the air, sounding his rattling call over the water, all the fish fled for safety. But I didn't; I knew that not even a bird would take the trouble to eat me.

"'What am I?' I thought; 'a fish? a snail? Am I really and truly a meaningless worm?'

"Then, one warm, sweet day in July, as I was lying in a sort of stupor on the soft, cool ooze in the bottom of the pond, I was aroused by a frantic pollywog who came wriggling past me, crying out, 'Hurrah! Hurrah! Look at my legs! I've got two legs! Hurrah!'

"In spite of the mud he kicked up, I recognized one of my brothers in this delirious pollywog.

"'Legs?' I said eagerly. 'Where did you get them?'

"'Grew 'em!' he replied excitedly, exhibiting two slender hind legs, which had apparently sprouted just under his tail. 'They're genuine frog's legs, too—the real thing! See, my toes are webbed, just like mother's.'

"I turned pale with hope. 'Perhaps—perhaps I may grow legs too,' I muttered.

"'Oh, I don't know,' he said carelessly; 'it takes a pretty smart pollywog to sprout a pair of real frog's legs!' and he began to kick up the mud with his new legs.

"'If you will just feel—there, under my skin—near my tail,' I said. 'It seems to me as though I had some sort of a leg growing.'

"My brother very complacently felt around on my stomach with his new legs.

"'Why, I declare,' he said; 'you *have* a pair of legs coming, after all!'

"'Really?' I cried, giddy with joy.

"And it was true; for that very evening a beautiful pair of legs appeared trailing in the water just under the root of my tail. Nor was that all; I began to perceive that I was going to sprout a pair of front legs, too; and intoxicated with pride and happiness, I wriggled and floundered about until I slapped an old pickerel across the nose with my tail.

"'I'd eat you for that if you were a week older,' he snapped out, slowly backing away from me. 'Go away, you pudgy pollywog!'

"'I'm a frog,' I cried; 'look at my legs!'

"'Frogs don't have tails,' said the pickerel with a rasping sneer.

"It was like a dash of cold air in my face. True, there was my tail! Crestfallen, I wriggled away among the waterweeds, not knowing what to call myself; for truly I was not a frog, after

all, and a terrible fear seized me when I saw a red-spotted water-lizard crawling along over the mud in front of me.

"'Am I a lizard?' I thought, 'a voiceless, four-legged, tailful newt?'

"There was a large bluish-black catfish lying quietly on the bottom. The current moved its whiskers until they swayed in the water like black threadworms.

"When I wiggled slowly past the fish, it opened its whiskered mouth in a silent laugh.

"'Are you grinning at me?' I asked.

"'Yes,' said the catfish, 'I am.'

"'Why?' I inquired sullenly.

"'Because you're going to lose your tail if you're not careful.'

"'Lose my tail?' I cried excitedly. 'Why, then, I'll be a real frog! Oh, I am so happy, so happy!'

"'Then you're not happy now?' asked the catfish mockingly.

"'I should think not,' I said; 'I am a nobody now.'

"'Better be a nobody and unfit for food than a somebody and good to eat,' said the catfish. 'As soon as you lose your tail everybody will be after you—the pickerel, the big sunfish, the big trout, the water-snakes, the muskrat, the mink—and then, up above there in the air, the owls, the hawks, the weazels, small boys, polecats—'

"'What do I care?' I cried; 'I'll be a frog, at any rate. And if at last I am to be eaten, I shall at least be eaten as a frog!—a glorious, speckled green frog! Hurrah! Hurrah!'

"And I gave one tremendous wriggle right up out of the water.

"In a week I was a frog. Fate cannot harm me now."

Greatly moved by the dramatic recital of the frog, Peter and Geraldine clapped their hands.

"Tell us more," they cried together.

"There is nothing more to tell," said the frog, "but I can sing you a little song of the Fatherland."

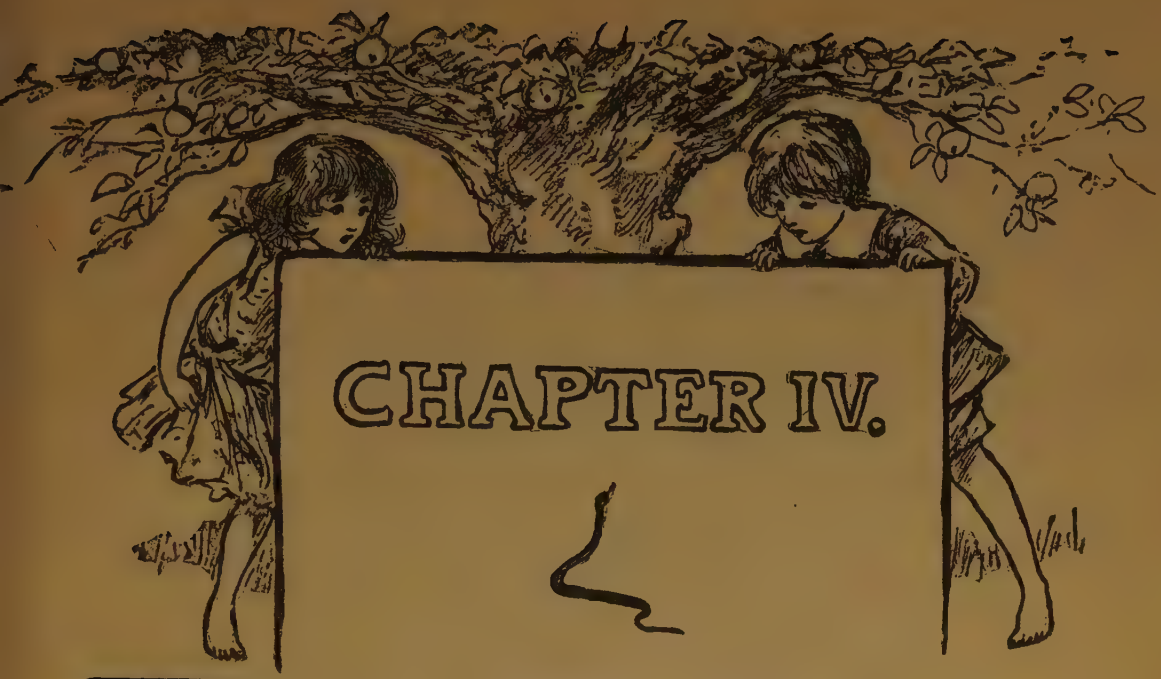
And he began:

"Ach! Bach! Reh-bok!
Reh-bok!
Reh-bok!"

But right in the middle of his simple little German melody he gave a curious squeak and plunged headlong into the stream—plash, splash! while, at the same moment, a long, keen hiss sounded in the grass close beside Geraldine.

"A snake!" she shrieked.

"Gewiss-s-s-s!" hissed the snake, lifting a glistening crest into the sunshine. "Are you going to be silly and run away?"



CHAPTER IV.

PETER," faltered Geraldine, "shall we scream and run away, or shall we scream and throw stones?"

"That's it," observed the snake in a discouraged hiss; "pretend to be afraid of me—I'm used to it."

"We are not pretending," said Peter; "are we, Geraldine?"

"What are you hunting around in the grass for?" asked the snake—"stones"?

"My shoes," muttered Peter, and being

perfectly truthful, he added, "I was looking for a stick, too."

"If you are going to act that way," said the snake, coiling up into a glittering green heap, "I'll hiss loud enough to wake up your nurse."

"If you do," said Geraldine, "she will take her scissors and snip off your head, and then your tail won't stop wiggling till the sun sets."

"What nonsense you talk, Geraldine," said the snake. "I know you would not hurt me, and *you* know it. Besides that, you are not in the least afraid of me. You are about fifty times as large as I am."

"But," replied Geraldine, "suppose you should bite me?"

"Suppose you should bite *me?*" retorted the snake.

"I wouldn't," cried Geraldine, shuddering.

"Neither would I," said the snake calmly. "Come, children, let's be reasonable."

"What's the use of screaming, Geraldine?" interposed Peter. "You stand behind me and I'll talk to this snake, and if he tries to crawl into our shoes—"

"No, no," said the snake hastily; "I am not that kind of a snake."

"But you're poison," insisted Geraldine, peeping over Peter's shoulder.

"Bosh!" retorted the snake.

"Do you mean to say that snakes are not poisonous?" demanded Peter.

"Do you know where the United States are?" inquired the snake.

"Of course we do!" replied the children; "we're standing on top of them."

"Can you bound them?" asked the snake lazily.

The children began to recite, in a droning voice: "The United States are bounded on the north-m-m-mum-m-m—"

And while they recited, they swayed in

unison from heel to toe with blank faces and half-closed eyes. It is not probable that they understood what they recited.

When they had finished, the snake raised his shimmering green head.

"Now listen to me," he said. "In all the United States there are only three kinds of poisonous serpents: the Copperhead, the Rattlesnake, and the Moccasin. Write that down in your geography, Geraldine."

"Truly?" asked Geraldine over Peter's shoulder. "What about poison adders?"

"You silly Indoor child, there are no poison adders in this country."

"And what are all the other snakes?" inquired Peter.

"*Good* snakes," said the garden snake fervently. "Ask any sensible farmer who it is that eats up the worms and insects which feed at his expense—just ask him, children."

"Who is it? You?" inquired Peter.

"'GEWISS-S!' HISSED THE SNAKE"

"Gewiss-s!" hissed the snake. "I'm a beneficial reptile. Come, Geraldine, be truthful and tell me that I am also beautiful."

"But—but you crawl," faltered Geraldine, shuddering.

"No, I don't crawl; one must have legs to crawl. I glide. You Indoor people all try to glide because you know it is graceful, but you can't—your legs stick out from your body and you can't glide."

"I glide when I dance," said Geraldine.

The snake gave a hiss of scorn.

"You all try to imitate us, but you can't. You try to glide because we glide; you try to swim because you see the frogs swim; you try to sing because you hear my cousins, the birds, singing."

"Your cousins!" cried Peter. "What impudence!"

"What *ignorance!*" said the snake sharply. "Didn't you know that we are closely related to

the lizards, and that the lizards are kin to the birds?"

"But birds lay eggs," cried Geraldine.

"So do snakes lay eggs and hatch 'em too!" retorted the garden snake triumphantly.

"Eggs?" repeated Geraldine. "Snakes lay eggs?"

The garden snake coiled up with a yawn.

"Sit down and put on your shoes and stockings, little ninnies, and listen to me."

The children sat down very gingerly and began to draw on their stockings, keeping their eyes on the snake all the while.

"To begin," said the snake, "you must know that I came from an egg—a little white egg, no bigger at one end than at the other, and the shell of my egg was elastic and the egg would not break if you let it fall, but would rebound like a rubber ball.

"There were several of us together in a nest under a big rock, and our mother, whose

skin was not quite as green as mine, folded us up in her shining coils and watched the entrance to our dark little home. Sometimes a squirrel came to look for little earth beetles, nuts, seeds, and ground-birds' eggs; and then my mother would hiss and put out her tongue at him, and frighten him almost out of his wits."

"We are not allowed to put out our tongues," observed Geraldine.

"Your education has been neglected," said the snake. "To continue," he went on, "we were all born together, and when we came out of our eggs we were only about as large as very small angleworms. But we were lively and excitable, and our mother took us about the country and taught us how to catch caterpillars and worms and insects.

"We were more afraid of the owls than of any other enemies, although an old dog-fox once snapped at mother, thinking she was asleep, but mother bit him through the nose, and he galloped

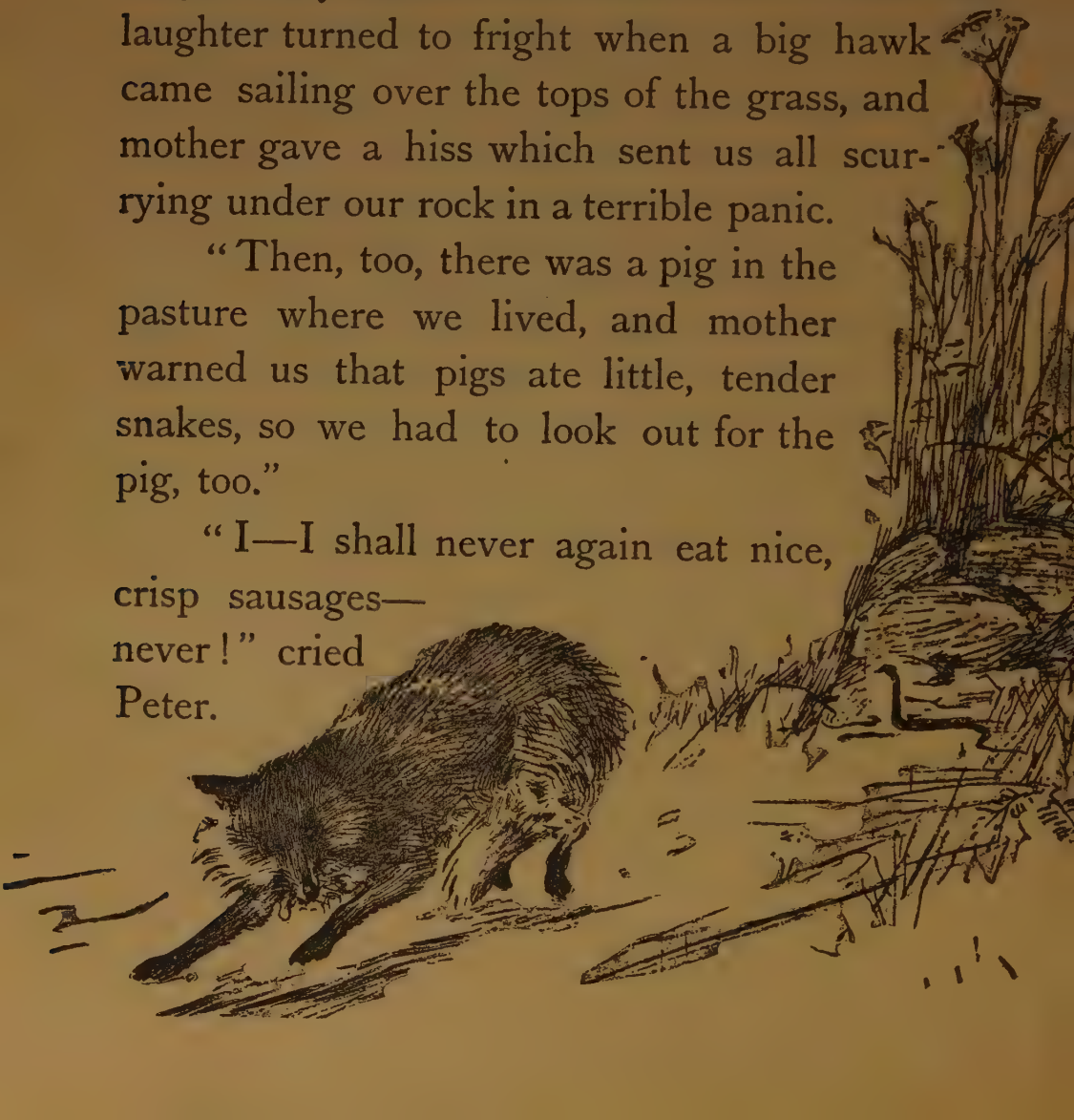
off with every red hair on end, sneezing and shaking his head."

"Your mother bit his *nose?*" asked Geraldine, horrified.

"Of course," said the snake; "and how we laughed, my brothers and sisters and I! But our laughter turned to fright when a big hawk came sailing over the tops of the grass, and mother gave a hiss which sent us all scurrying under our rock in a terrible panic.

"Then, too, there was a pig in the pasture where we lived, and mother warned us that pigs ate little, tender snakes, so we had to look out for the pig, too."

"I—I shall never again eat nice, crisp sausages—never!" cried Peter.



"Don't be silly," said the snake; "don't you want to grow? We grew very fast when the grasshopper season came on, and mother thought that we ought to try to earn our own living, now that we were big enough to defend ourselves.

"My color at that time was grayish, tinged with green, and as I did not match the vivid green grass, I remained in the brownish herbs of the pasture, and it was not easy to distinguish me from the ground where I lay.

"Once a great stupid Shanghai hen tried to swallow me, and gave me such a peck that I thought that my last hour had come; and I believe it would have come, for she was preparing to peck me in two, when suddenly she set up a terrible squaking and tried to fly, and I saw a fox cub chasing her with his mouth full of her tail feathers."

"And now we can't eat chicken either," said Geraldine piteously. "What can we eat, Peter?"

The snake ignored her.

"It was very exciting," he went on; "the hen was much too big for the fox cub to manage, and she made such an outcry that the dogs at the farm came flying, and the cub fled.

"Oh, I've had some thrilling moments in my life, children. Once a brown and white weasel chased me; once I fell asleep on a nice, warm rock in the sunshine, and a party of little Indoor children found me and began to stone me. Goodness knows how I escaped, all bruised and sore and frightened. I had never harmed children, and I did not suppose they would be cruel to me."

Peter and Geraldine looked guiltily at each other.

"The next day," continued the snake, "I went to see a cousin of mine, a black snake, who resided under a palatial heap of stones near the edge of the woods.

"I showed him my bruises and my torn

skin, and he said it served me right, because all snakes ought to know that the Indoor child is deadly to all our family.

"I stayed with him a few days, and he tried to teach me to charm birds and magnetize them with my eyes, but I did not care for that sort of thing, nor was I willing to follow my cousin when he ascended trees to hunt for birds' eggs."

"Do snakes climb trees like boys?" asked Peter, much interested.

"Some kinds of snakes climb," said the grass snake. "I was then as I am now, a perfectly harmless reptile, fond of sleeping in the sun, adoring a luncheon of fat grasshoppers; and, besides, I was excessively timid.

"One day I found that my eyesight was troubling me. This alarmed me, because my life depended on my two little bright eyes. But, to my alarm, the sight of my eyes grew dimmer and dimmer, a white, opaque scale covered them; I could not see to move."

"Did you wear glasses?" asked Geraldine. "My grandmother does."

"How could I? I have no place to wear them," said the snake sadly. "It was awful. I lost my appetite through sheer fright, I think; and I really don't know what might have happened to me had not my cousin, the black snake, found me lying in the weeds, limp and totally blind and scared almost senseless.

"'Pooh,' said my cousin; 'it's only what all snakes have to go through. You are about to change your skin. There's nothing to be frightened about in that!'

"And he was right. My entire skin crackled like tissue-paper when I moved; I began to wiggle and shove to free myself of it, twisting, twining, threshing this way and that, until finally I had cast off the white, translucent skin and lay panting and glittering in my exquisite green and turquoise scales."

"Are you related to the milk-weed butterfly?" asked Geraldine eagerly.

"Intimately, but only when I eat him," said the snake.

"When I cast off my old skin," he continued, "I knew at once that I was conspicuously beautiful, and that if I lay there in the brown herbage, which had so closely matched my old skin, some weasel or hawk would notice me and try to catch me.

"So I started straight for the greenest grass I could find, and there I have taken care to remain, because it is almost impossible to distinguish me from the grass itself."

Geraldine, fascinated, stared at the snake.

"I am not afraid of you," she said; "you are like a live jewel. I am very glad that you are not poisonous."

"There's not a drop of poison in me," said the little snake. "Now, I'll tell you how to distinguish those poisonous relatives of mine,

if you should ever see them. First of all, those fellows have very flat, arrow-shaped, or triangular heads. All poisonous snakes have very small scales on their heads, eyes with vertical pupils; and all move and feed at night. Almost all are banded with some shade of yellow and black; some have deep pits between eye and nostril.

"The Moccasin is a water snake; he's short and fat. The Rattler has a rattle on the end of his tail, and he warns you if you come near him. The Copperhead is brilliant in colour. When you see a reddish snake with a flat triangle of a head, run, Geraldine!"

"I will," said Geraldine earnestly.

"But remember," continued the grass snake, "these poisonous serpents will run away from you, if you give them the chance."

"We will!" cried the children together.

"Except," continued the grass snake, "when they are getting ready to change

their skins; then it is better to run away from them."

"How do those snakes poison people?" asked Peter with a shudder.

"Why, they have a couple of hollow teeth set on little elastic gums or cushions. These cushions are really little bags full of poison, and when the snake bites, these bags of poison are squeezed and the poison spurts out through the hollow, needle-like teeth.

"But, really, this is not a pleasant subject, even for a snake.

"We good and useful snakes try so hard to behave ourselves. But people *won't* understand. There are many, many very beautiful and graceful snakes that are quite friendly with everybody. All they ask is to be treated without cruelty, and they will catch mice and toads and frogs—"

"Not much!" came a hoarse voice from the edge of the water.

"Why, there's our frog!" cried Geraldine.

"It's a shame to tell those little Indoor children that you eat frogs!" said the frog.

"I didn't say that I ate frogs," hissed the snake; "but you know what my cousin, the black snake, would do to you if he had a chance."

"I know what he would do to *me!*" broke in a clear, chirping voice from above; and the next instant a bird flew down into the grass beside Geraldine, landing with a hop and flirt of his tail.

"Oh, you pretty thing!" cried Geraldine. "Peter, have you a little pinch of salt in your pocket?"

The bird burst into a perfect shower of laughing chirps. Suddenly it stood motionless, cocked its head, ran a few steps, halted, then darted its bill into the grass, tugging and pulling until it drew out a long angleworm, which it swallowed like a flash.

"Geraldine, what a business-like bird!" exclaimed Peter.

"Oh, I'm the most American individual in the United States," said the bird with a chirp and a satisfied flirt of wings and tail.

"What are you," asked Geraldine—"a—a sparrow?"

"Poor little Indoor child!" said the bird; "you came from the city and no mistake. Sparrow! Well, I guess not!"

"Even a pollywog would know what that bird is," observed the frog.

"Gewiss-s!" added the snake.

"Well," said the bird, cocking its head thoughtfully to scratch its cheek, "you all call me a robin, and you're wrong, because I am really a kind of a thrush. But all the world calls me the American Robin, so we'll let it go at that. My, but that angleworm was tough!" added the bird, ruffling up.

"Sit still or you'll have indigestion," said

the grass snake. "I always lie perfectly quiet when I've swallowed something too large for me."

The robin reflected, with his head on one side.

"Suppose you tell us all about your youthful days," suggested Geraldine.

"Dear me, that was almost a year ago!" cried the robin. "I was a greenish-blue egg last May—up in that very apple-tree, too. I'm helping my wife hatch out our own eggs now. How time flies, to be sure!"

"Do you think your wife would mind if you stayed here a little while?" asked Peter.

"Mind? Well, I don't know. She's a dear thing, but a little quick; and she's so worried over those eggs. It's a dreadful wear and tear on a bird's nerves, this hatching out eggs; besides, I ought to be doing a thousand things."

"Oh, do stay just long enough to tell us a very, very short story," pleaded Geraldine.

The robin cocked his head and glanced up at the apple-tree. Nothing moved up there.

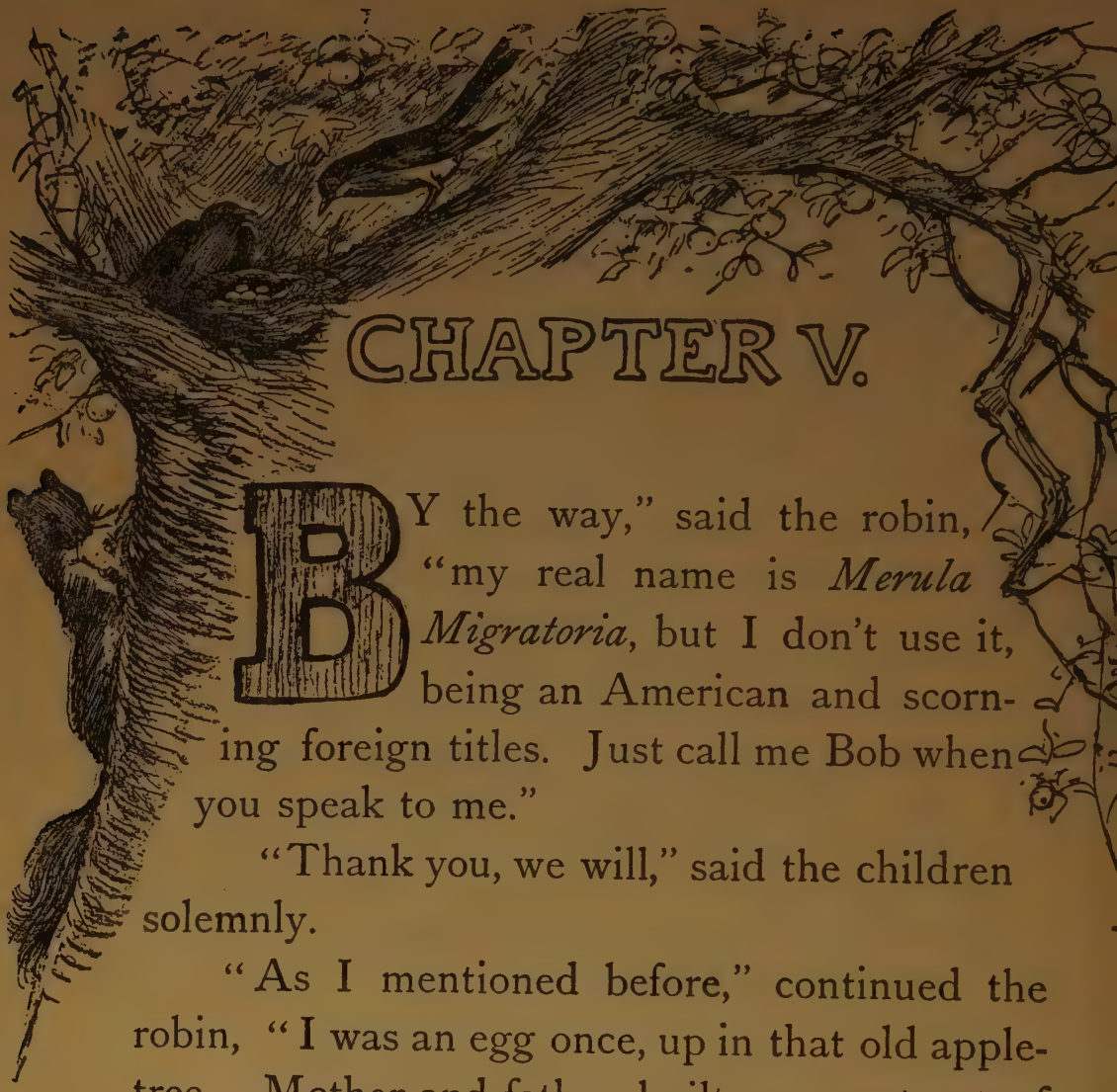
"Dearest," he chirped, "do you mind if I talk to this little Indoor girl awhile?"

A bird's head was thrust over the edge of a nest concealed in the forks of an upper limb. Two bright, dark eyes surveyed the children for a moment, then the lady-robin said distinctly: "Does the Indoor child wear wild birds' wings in her hat, Bob?"

"*Do* you?" inquired the robin severely.

"No," said Geraldine; "mamma belongs to the Audubon Society."

"Then you may talk to her, Bob," said the bird on the nest above; and the pretty feathered head disappeared.



CHAPTER V.

"BY the way," said the robin, "my real name is *Merula Migratoria*, but I don't use it, being an American and scorning foreign titles. Just call me Bob when you speak to me."

"Thank you, we will," said the children solemnly.

"As I mentioned before," continued the robin, "I was an egg once, up in that old apple-tree. Mother and father built our nest out of mud and sticks and all sorts of litter. Goodness! what an untidy house it was; but you know that it is impossible for robins to learn the art of house-cleaning. We were five beautiful eggs—"

"'JUST CALL ME BOB,' SAID THE ROBIN"

"My cousin, the black snake, says that you robins only lay four eggs," interrupted the little grass snake.

"You're too smart," chirped the robin. "As I was saying, we were five eggs together in the nest, and it puzzled poor mother terribly, because she had only laid four eggs. She counted them over and over, backwards and forwards, and then she called to father, who was singing on a fence; and he came and looked at the five eggs and he counted them over and over until his head grew dizzy. But he couldn't make less than five eggs and mother had only laid four.

"'The trouble is,' said mother, 'that you are not proficient in arithmetic. I don't believe there are five eggs here.'

"'The trouble is,' said father, 'that you've been overdoing your part, my dear.'

"'Are you finding fault?' asked mother sharply.

"'Not at all,' replied father; 'you are certainly a most remarkable bird.' And he flew into the top branches of the apple-tree and sang that pretty nesting song which we robins always sing. You know it, of course—a song that always seems to be just on the point of becoming beautiful?"

"Oh, I think it is beautiful!" cried Geraldine. "I hear it every morning when mother comes to wake us."

"Well," continued the robin, much pleased, "there we lay in our nest. Four of us eggs were a most exquisite greenish-blue colour, and the fifth egg was white, speckled with brown.

"This puzzled father sadly, but he said nothing at the time, because mother was so worn and worried with anxiety, and her naturally sweet temper had become a trifle sharp. She moped as though she were moulting. One day while father had gone to dig angleworms after a warm spring rain, mother sat thinking on the

nest, half asleep, when suddenly a queer sensation of being watched came over her. The next instant the head of a black snake appeared just above the edge of the nest."

"Oh!" exclaimed Geraldine, and Peter drew in his breath very hard. "*Your cousin!*" he said severely to the grass snake.

"My cousin was after the eggs," admitted the little green snake. "It's his one bad habit; he can't seem to break himself of stealing eggs, but really he's a good fellow at heart; he is really and truly, Peter."

"My mother," resumed the robin, "was perfectly paralyzed with fright for a moment. Then she flew up, every feather on end, shrieking for father, who came like a flash. Together they gave that cousin of yours a lively time," added the robin, glancing maliciously at the little green snake. "But as your cousin started to retreat down the tree, he made a quick grab at the eggs, and seized the odd brown and

white egg. And what do you think? Just as my parents flew at him to make him drop the egg, a big, furry, red squirrel, who had been watching the excitement from an upper branch, burst out laughing and called out to mother: 'Let him have that ugly brown and white egg. It's not yours, madam!'

"'Not mine!' cried my mother; 'what do you mean, you idiot squirrel?'

"'I mean that a lazy old cowbird came and laid that egg in your nest while you were away,' said the squirrel, tittering and chuckling.

"By that time, the black snake had slipped down to the ground and was hurrying off with the egg.

"'Are you sure of what you say?' asked father, who had heard that those miserable cowbirds often lay eggs in other birds' nests to save themselves the trouble of hatching.

"'I saw her,' said the squirrel. 'I was not going to tell, because it was a pretty good joke

on you and your wife, but I don't want you to grieve over that egg, and that's the reason I tell you. Cheer up! There's only a cowbird the less in town.'

"So father and mother did cheer up, and shortly after that we were all hatched."

"Were you cunning and pretty?" asked Geraldine softly.

"No," said the robin frankly. "And oh, my! how small we were—all skin and yellow bill and legs, huddling together, gaping for food, and uttering incessant peeps for the nourishment that our parents brought us every few moments.

"We gave them no time to eat; we were so hungry that mother and father grew thin in their efforts to find worms and insects for us.

"Our feathers grew after a while; mother and father taught us to fly a little, but we were almost too fat and lazy to try. And we even found it too much trouble to look for our own food, although we were nearly as big as our parents.

"Our breasts were not red like father's; they were speckled like a thrush's breast at first. It took me a year to grow this beautiful red breast. And to tell the truth," continued the robin, "I never was very handsome until I met my wife. Then my feathers changed, my head became velvety black, my back slate color, and my breast a lovely dark red.

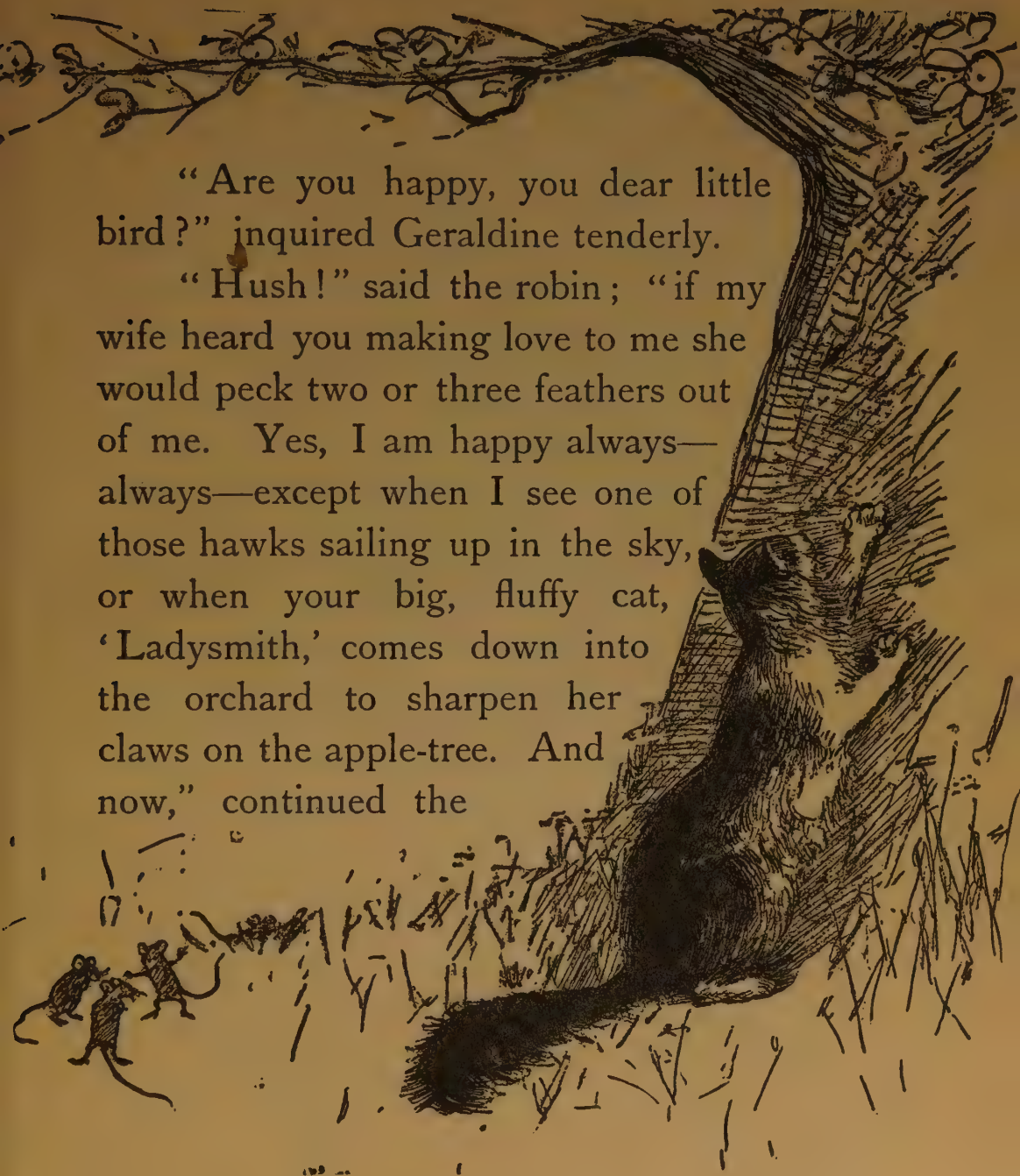
"I am in the pink of condition; I can eat four dozen angleworms a day—and I do—"

"You eat fruit; you're not as beneficial as I am," said the green snake.

"Oh, I eat very little fruit," replied the robin, laughing; "I make it up in ridding the trees of caterpillars, anyway."

"Are you good to eat?" asked Peter.

"Very," said the robin; "but it's a shame to shoot robins, because we are really harmless and exceedingly picturesque. Anyway, nobody but a bad boy or a Dutchman would shoot us, because there is a law against it."



"Are you happy, you dear little bird?" inquired Geraldine tenderly.

"Hush!" said the robin; "if my wife heard you making love to me she would peck two or three feathers out of me. Yes, I am happy always—always—except when I see one of those hawks sailing up in the sky, or when your big, fluffy cat, 'Ladysmith,' comes down into the orchard to sharpen her claws on the apple-tree. And now," continued the

robin, catching a small moth in his bill, and speaking with difficulty, "I must gather a little luncheon for my wife. She's so busy hatching our eggs that she hasn't much time to look out for herself.

"Oh, we're a very, very busy pair of birds these days. We are going to try to hatch out two more broods this year, after this one. So I must be flying—"

"Don't go yet!" cried Geraldine, as the robin flew to a low branch overhead.

"Can't wait," said the robin; "I have a busy summer before me, feeding my wife and myself and later the three broods of children, teaching them to fly; and then, just before the snow comes, we've got to be ready to leave for Mexico at any moment—"

"Mexico!" exclaimed Peter.

"We always winter in the South," said the robin—"sometimes in Mexico, sometimes as far north as New Jersey, but usually south of

Virginia. Now, I really ought to be going, Peter. I'm too busy to sit here and spin yarns like that fat old spider in the willows yonder—"

"Fat!" cried a tiny voice. "Is that the word to use to a lady, you globe-trotting bird?"

Geraldine and Peter turned with a start.

"Spiders?" inquired Geraldine tremulously. "I'm not very fond of spiders."

"You only exhibit bad breeding to say so to my face and under my very web," came the tiny, angry voice.

The robin chuckled, twitched his tail and flew away through the orchard.

"There it is!" whispered Peter, pointing to a tuft of willows which arched over Geraldine's head; "there's the spider. My, what a pretty spider!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE spider, a large yellow and black specimen, sat near the centre of a web which stretched out between the tips of two willow twigs.

The web glistened like silver; one or two drops of morning dew still clung to it.

"Do you really think I am pretty?" asked the spider, much flattered by Peter's exclamation.

"Yes," said Peter; "do you bite? Handsome is as handsome does, you know."

"What do you mean by that?" snapped the spider. "Bite? Of course I bite when people disturb me."

"That is not very pleasant of you," said Geraldine.

"Geraldine," said the spider, "what did you do yesterday when Peter pinched you?"

"I pinched him," replied Geraldine.

"And that's what I do," observed the spider; "I only pinch back."

"Is your bite poisonous?" asked Peter in an awed voice.

"Is your pinch poisonous?" snapped the spider.

"Of course not!" replied Peter indignantly. "What a silly question!"

"Which? yours or mine?" asked the spider.

"What a snippy, snappy creature she is," whispered Geraldine. "Don't answer her back, Peter. It's undignified."

There was silence for a while. Peter and Geraldine looked curiously at the spider and at the beautiful silvery web. The web was round

like a cart-wheel, with slender threads spreading out from the centre like silken spokes.

"I wish she'd tell us how she made that web," whispered Geraldine. But the spider was silent.

Suddenly Peter burst out: "You're not an insect, anyway."

"Why not?" asked the spider sharply.

"Because you have eight legs, and a true insect has only six."

"Who told you that?" demanded the spider.

"Oh, a butterfly friend of mine," said Peter airily.

"If I catch your butterfly friend he won't have any legs at all," observed the spider grimly.

After a painful pause, Geraldine said politely: "If you please, ma'am, where is your husband?"

"Oh, he's hanging around somewhere

under sticks and stones," replied the spider. "It is a very rare thing to see a full-grown gentleman spider in a web; only lady spiders and young spiders live in webs."

"But what does your husband do?" asked Peter.

"He comes around sometimes," replied the spider. "You see, he is never quite sure whether I will receive him affectionately or—or—"

"Or what?" asked Geraldine.

"Or eat him up," snapped the spider.

"Goodness!" exclaimed Geraldine.

"Oh, he's only a small fellow—a poor sort of creature," said the spider. "All gentlemen spiders are, as a rule, much smaller than lady spiders. And they're not bad eating, only I prefer a fat fly."

"To change the subject," said Peter hastily, "suppose you kindly explain to us how you spin that beautiful web of yours."

"I don't mind telling you," said the spider, "for you can't spin a copy of it, no matter how hard you try."

"Did you spin it on a spinning-wheel?" asked Geraldine politely.

"No; and I didn't knit it, or crochet it, or cut it out from a paper pattern. I used my legs and spinnerets. Do you know what the web really is? It is a liquid which hardens into silk as soon as it comes out of the spinnerets. I have three pairs of these spinnerets, and I draw my silk thread out of them with my hind legs.

"Each thread is really made of hundreds of smaller threads, all twisted into one. Perhaps you think I am not clever, but I'm clever enough to braid a thread out of fibres so small that you can't see them."

"You are very clever, madam," said Peter soothingly.

"Of course I am," said the spider, with a disagreeable laugh. "I'll tell you how to do it,

too. As the thread runs from my body I guide it with my feet, so that it will not tear on any twig or leaf.

"Now, when I want to build a web I select a corner and then rapidly run a few threads along the objects to which I intend to fasten my web. Then I draw a thread or two across the point where the centre is to be. From there I stretch out threads like spokes in a wheel, and fasten them to the square outline already spun.

"I now begin in the centre and spin round and round, slowly enlarging the circles, until I have filled the entire web with a spiral.

"Now I can run all over the web. You see, each one of my feet has three claws, the middle claw bent like a hook, so that it is easy for me to cling to my threads. And after that what do you suppose I do? I use the web as a scaffolding or a framework for the *true* web, which is spun out of a very different kind of silk."

"Imported?" asked Geraldine.

"Stuff and rubbish!" snapped the spider. "Don't interrupt me. Listen! For every new circle I spin I destroy a circle of the old framework, replacing it with a spiral of sticky thread. This new sticky thread is meant to catch flies and hold them just as your sticky fly-paper holds them.

"When I finish spinning the sticky threads, I have only a small place in the centre of the web made out of smooth, dry silk.

"Here I sit, with one foot pressing a tight thread. If I feel a twitch on one of the threads of the web I seize another thread and pull. If I feel something struggling out there in the threads, I rush out to see what it is. And," said the spider with a drawl, "I usually find my dinner."

"A poor little fly," quavered Geraldine.

"Sometimes. Sometimes a big, silly bumblebee; and then I have to repair the damage

"'STUFF AND RUBBISH!' SNAPPED THE SPIDER"

he has done by blundering into my web. But if it is a fly, I rush out, careful, however, not to step on the sticky threads, but only on the smooth, tight, dry ones, and I seize that fly and spin a silk bag around him in a jiffy."

"And then?" asked Peter, who loved horrible details.

"Then, when I need fresh meat, I have it," said the spider.

"But how do you eat the fly?" persisted Peter.

"How do you eat an orange?"

"I—I suck the juice out," admitted Peter.

"That's the way I eat a fly," observed the spider, dreamily watching a tiny winged creature drifting by.

"Alive?" cried Peter.

"Is your orange alive when you eat it?" asked the spider.

"Why, no—"

"Is it dead?" inquired the spider.

"Oh, no—"

"The orange isn't alive and it isn't dead," sneered the spider. "Very well, change the subject again. I may as well tell you that we spiders are not like butterflies that begin as eggs, then become caterpillars, then turn into chrysalides, and finally into butterflies. We come out of our eggs as spiders, tiny spiders. We change our skins, of course, every little while when we outgrow them. Then when we, in our turn, lay eggs, we lay several hundreds of them and enclose them in a silk bag for safety. We usually carry the bag around with us, and if any insects try to take it away, we fight for it."

"And bite 'em and poison 'em," suggested Peter with unction.

"There are no poisonous spiders in our country," said the spider—"that is, poisonous to man—except one or possibly two in the extreme South; and even these may not be poisonous to everybody."

"Would they be poisonous to me?" asked Peter.

"Probably," said the spider coldly; and Peter shrank back and took Geraldine's hand.

"The truth is," said the spider, "that there is no more poison in us than there is in a mosquito or black fly, and not as much as there is in a hornet or a wasp.

"Wasps and hornets poison some people; even mosquitoes can make certain unhealthy people ill. And, besides, they are suspected of carrying the germs of fevers into the veins of Indoor folk. Serves 'em right, too."

"Why are you so ill tempered?" asked Geraldine.

"I'm not," said the spider. "I bite when attacked or injured; but it's the bite that hurts, not the poison. Our poison is not a bit more dangerous to most people than the poison of a stinging nettle. You Indoor people are a sickly, tender lot. Ivy poisons some people; the pollen

of grasses and flowers poisons others, and they call it hay-fever.

"The sting of a yellow-jacket *might* make some people very ill, but, as a rule, it does not.

"But I will add—to be perfectly fair—that there is a certain relative of mine in the South, a big, hairy spider who lives in the ground, and who is considered very poisonous to everybody or anybody. He is called a Tarantula. Better not pick him up, Peter."

"We both promise not to," said Geraldine solemnly.

"It's a warning," said the spider. "You see, I'm a good-hearted spider, after all."

"Have you really a heart?" asked Peter.

"Heart? Certainly. And I have lungs and a stomach and an excellent digestive system. I hear sounds, though my ears are on my legs, and I smell, though I have no nose.

"The fact is," added the spider, "that I am a much more interesting and important creature than you are, Peter, and you might as well know it."

The spider suddenly dropped and hung in mid-air suspended by a single thread.

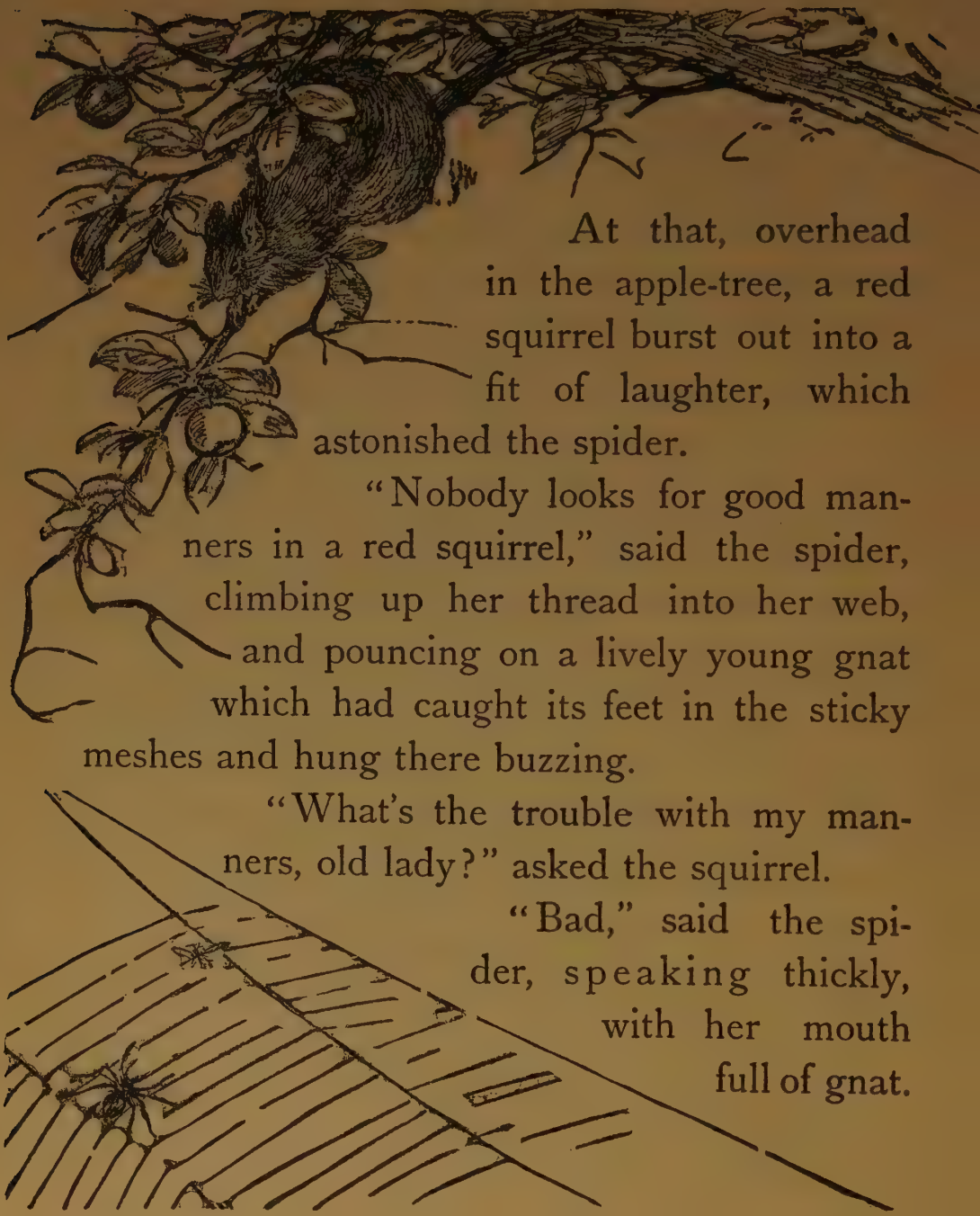
"What are you going to do?" asked Geraldine quickly.

"Can you remember that poem which was once written about me?" asked the spider, dropping down another inch.

"About little Miss Muffet?" suggested Peter.

"She was in it, but the poem was about *me*," said the spider. "At any rate, I always wanted to ask some Indoor child why it was that Miss Muffet ran away when the spider came and sat down beside her. Do you know why?"

"Yes, I know why," said Geraldine truthfully, "but I am too polite to tell you."



At that, overhead in the apple-tree, a red squirrel burst out into a fit of laughter, which astonished the spider.

"Nobody looks for good manners in a red squirrel," said the spider, climbing up her thread into her web, and pouncing on a lively young gnat which had caught its feet in the sticky meshes and hung there buzzing.

"What's the trouble with my manners, old lady?" asked the squirrel.

"Bad," said the spider, speaking thickly, with her mouth full of gnat.

"I don't talk with my mouth full," observed the snake.

"Because you can't," said the squirrel. "You would if you could. Did you ever see me fill both cheeks full of nuts and then chatter like mad for twenty minutes? Ask the woodchuck if you don't believe me."

"How intensely vulgar that squirrel is!" said the spider. "His bad manners are notorious.

"Wasn't it Professor Brewer who wrote his warning to people who explored the woods?

"'And there the woodchuck doth tread.
And from the oak tree top
The red, red squirrel on thy head
The frequent acorns drop.'"

"I don't! I don't!" shrieked the squirrel in a piercing voice.

"Hush!" cried the green snake. "Do you want to wake up that fat French Governess?"

THE END.

"Gracious!" whispered Peter to Geraldine, "I do believe she *is* going to wake!"

"Under those circumstances," said the snake, "I am fully prepared to say good-bye to you. Please give my respects to your Governess, and tell her to teach you kindness when you are tired of geography."

And the little green snake wiggled off through the orchard.

Then the frog hopped up to say good-bye, and extended a cold, webbed foot for Peter to shake.

"Don't be discouraged," he said; "we all cannot be frogs, and even Indoor children were made to fulfil *some* purpose in the world."

"Teach your little Indoor friends to respect

the privacy of all birds' nests," laughed the robin.

"We truly will!" said the children solemnly.

"And you won't let your black cat come squalling about under our tree?"

"No, indeed; Ladysmith shall eat so much that she will be too fat to climb trees," promised Geraldine.

A silvery voice from the stream came tinkling on the air.

"It's the trout!" cried Peter.

"Catch me if you can! My wit against yours, Peter!" called out the hidden trout.

"Do you think I'd try to catch you?" asked Peter indignantly. "You are my friend!"

"You can never tell what you'll try to do when you're old enough to go fishing," laughed the trout.

"At all events," said the spider, "I hope you and Geraldine will have the decency to let my web alone."

"We certainly will," said Geraldine primly; "Good-bye!"

"Good-bye! Good-bye!" came the cry. The tiny voices of the grass swelled the chorus; the apple-tree swayed and rustled, and whispered: "Good children, come again and climb into my branches, and I'll tell you how they grafted me so that I grow red apples on one limb and yellow apples on another limb."

"Indeed we will! We'll come now!" cried Peter.

"To-morrow," said the tree mildly, but firmly; and deliberately dropped a tiny apple plump on the head of the sleeping Governess.

"Eh!" she cried, sitting up, half awake. "Eh! Ah! Oh!—Attends un peu! who has done zis to make fall ze apple on my head?"

"It only fell," said Peter calmly. "Shall we spell Biology, Mademoiselle?"

The Governess looked at the children,

pushed the spectacles back on her nose, yawned, and coughed.

"How long time have I been t'inking so wiz my eyes close?" she asked sharply.

"About two hours," said Peter. "Did it hurt you to sit there so long and think with your eyes shut, Mademoiselle?"

The Governess looked at him suspiciously.

"Because," said Geraldine, "you groaned through your nose."

"Taisez-vous, tous les deux!" said the Governess. "Petaire, you will immediately spell for us ze worrd Biology! And some day, when you are sufficiently old, I shall explain to you what ze worrd does mean."

Peter and Geraldine looked at each other. "Merci, Mademoiselle," they said demurely.

So Peter spelled Biology, and then the children closed their books and followed Mademoiselle back through the orchard to the house; for it was luncheon time, and past.

And as they trotted through the long, sweet, sun-drenched grass, hand in hand, out of the corners of their eyes they saw the beautiful red and brown milk-weed butterfly seated on a thistle, waving his splendid wings in salutation.

"Good-bye," whispered the children as they passed the butterfly.

But only they could hear the sweet, tiny voice reply, "Good-bye."

RIVER-LAND

RIVER-LAND

I

THE YELLOW BUTTERFLY

GERALDINE and Peter, noses flattened against the window-pane, listened to the breezy swish! swish! of the summer rain along the wet veranda. And while they listened

Copyright, 1904, by Robert W. Chambers

they recited in a discouraged whisper this remarkable poem:

"Water wet, dust dry,
Land low, sky high,
Sun shine by-and-by;
Rain, rain, go away,
Come again another day,
Farmers wait to make the hay!"

"Oh, Peter!" sighed Geraldine, "don't you think we've said it enough?"

"Keep it up," said Peter, hopefully; "the rain is sure to stop if we only talk enough."

"But my mouth is tired," whimpered Geraldine.

"Well, then," said Peter, "we won't repeat the poem until your mouth is rested, but we'll think it as hard as we can. Now, when you're ready to think that poem, just nod your head."

Geraldine looked out at the rain, her brows puckered, her blue eyes steadily fixed. Presently she nodded, earnestly.

The roar of the rain on roof and window filled the silence for a while, then, little by little, the silvery downpour slackened.

"I told you so!" said Peter, excitedly. "Now let's think like fury, Geraldine!"

A robin, gray wings spread, came sailing past the window and alighted on the wet lawn. Another arrived, dropping into the grass with a flirt of his tail and a cheery outburst of chirping. Then, singly and in pairs, the wild birds came winging to the lawn; robins, heads high, taking short little runs through the soaking clover; bronze grackles stalking to and fro, pale-yellow eyes staring about for insects; bluebirds softly fluttering and singing as they drifted from fence to fence like big, azure-tinted moths; golden-winged woodpeckers, chipping sparrows, even a shy, slate-colored cat-bird mewing in the pear-tree on the terrace, and making short dashes in pursuit of little winged things that fluttered in the dripping hedge.

A moment later the sun broke out through the rain, dissolving it to a golden fog, through which the pines on the hill shimmered like the pearl-tinted spires of fairyland.

"We've done it! Three cheers for us!" cried Peter, scrambling hastily down from the window-seat. Geraldine slid to the floor, cheering excitedly.

"We thank ourselves," said Peter, with a low bow, "for this unexpected and flattering applause. Courtesy to yourself, Geraldine."

Geraldine courtesied to herself three times, laying her small hand on her heart, and moving her lips in modest acknowledgment of the compliment.

Then they raced to the library door. "Mother!" they said, in the same breath, "may we go out and play?"

Their mother looked up with a smile and nodded, and away they flew with a gay shout,

their parting cry floating back through the open door—

"Thank you, mother dear!"

Across the lawn sunlight fell; shrubbery and hedge brightened, and a million tender leaves twinkled as the south wind stirred them. The children crossed the garden where wet roses and half-closed lilies hung powdered with sparkling spray, where in hollyhock and lark-spur, bent and weighted heavily, wet bumble-bees buzzed, drying their gossamer wings in the sun.

Long ago in *Outdoor-land* the children had learned that the world loved them; long ago they had learned to understand the tiny voices chorusing from grass and thicket and leafy branch. They heard the great golden-banded bees grumbling to the little brown bees about their wet and mussy wings; they heard the ants in the grass calling to one another, "Hasten! hasten! The rain has flattened out

our little hills and there are a thousand things to be done before sunset!"

They heard the great green caterpillar crunching away at the woodbine leaves on the trellis; they heard a fat garden-toad, who had jumped for a fly and missed it, panting, "Oh my! oh my! How vexing to be jeered at by a fly!" And they heard the fly buzzing with laughter.

Yellow butterflies were flying across the lawn in twos and threes, darting hither and thither, and whenever two butterflies passed, the children heard their tiny voices calling one to another, "Meet me at the puddle! Meet me at the puddle!"

"Suppose we go, too," said Peter.

"Where?" asked Geraldine.

"To the puddle where all the yellow butterflies are going. There must be something curious going on there." And he called out to a hurrying yellow butterfly, "Where is the puddle you all are going to?"

"On the river-road," answered the tiny voice.

"Is it very muddy?" inquired Geraldine, as another yellow butterfly darted off at a tangent and came fluttering around her face.

"Muddy? I should say so. It is deliciously muddy with the very muddiest kind of mud. Don't miss it, children. There 'll be a brilliant assembly there after this rain."

"But where is it?" asked Peter, as the yellow butterfly fluttered off.

"You can't miss it!" called back the butterfly; "it's a puddle full of the muddiest kind of mud and the wettest kind of wet. Au revoir!" In a moment more he became a twinkling speck of gilt across the sunny meadow. As the children followed, through thickets of mint and bergamot and fresh sweet grasses, soaked to the knees, scores of butterflies passed them, all hurrying to the trysting-place, and the air rang with little voices all calling: "Meet me at the puddle! Meet me at the puddle!"

The soft summer wind dried the children's wet stockings and shoes as they ran along the sunny lane which led down to the river-road; and very soon they saw the river flowing between green banks over which willow and alder bent, and slender branches dipped in the brimming current.

"Gracious!" exclaimed Geraldine, as they came into the road. "Did you ever see so many yellow butterflies in all your life!"

The road ahead was thick with yellow butterflies rising, drifting, fluttering, settling again around a great bright yellow patch which lay in the middle of the road like a circle of yellow blossoms.

"What is that yellow spot?" asked Geraldine.

"Why, it is a whole garden of solid yellow butterflies!" cried Peter, in amazement. And it was. Hundreds and hundreds of brilliant primrose wings tufted the mud; above, a

"'WHY, IT IS A WHOLE GARDEN OF SOLID YELLOW BUTTERFLIES!' CRIED PETER"

column of butterflies whirled up like a pillar of golden smoke.

"Have a drink, children?" inquired a butterfly, fluttering around Geraldine's white pinafore. "The puddle is delicious this morning."

"Did you come here to *drink?*" asked Geraldine, incredulously.

"Why, of course," said the butterfly; "didn't you?"

"I should think not!" cried Peter. "How can you drink that muddy stuff when there is the river full of sweet, clear water?"

"Why, the flavor of a puddle is wonderful," explained the yellow butterfly. "It's full of all kinds of appetizing tastes. It's like the richest and soupiest kind of soup. I've been drinking here since the rain stopped! I'm gorged; and I think I'll alight on one of your fingers, Geraldine. Please spread them out, and I'll select a finger to sit on."

Geraldine held out her hand, slim fingers separated.

"Do you take home a dish of puddle-soup to your children?" asked Peter, as the butterfly settled on Geraldine's middle finger and closed its wings.

"My children," said the butterfly, "have just hatched out. They're caterpillars now."

"Are they down there eating puddle-soup, too?"

"No, they're eating clover leaves in your clover-field."

"Where did they hatch? In a nest?" inquired Geraldine.

"No. My wife laid the eggs on clover-stems. The eggs were not much bigger than the point of a pin, and they were yellow at first. Then they turned the brightest and loveliest crimson; then the little caterpillars hatched, and I think they drank up all the dew on the stem before they began to eat. My,

how thirsty they were! Then they nibbled at the empty egg-shells and then started in on the clover."

The butterfly opened and closed its sunny wings. "The caterpillars are green, striped with paler green," he said. "In a few weeks each caterpillar will turn into a pale-green chrysalis, you know," he added, nodding sagely.

"How?" demanded Peter.

"Just the way I did when I was a caterpillar. I crawled up a stem and spun a little button of silk on it. Then I hooked my hind feet into it and spun a fashionable belt of silk around my middle. There I hung, feet fastened, slung against the stem by a tiny rope of silk."

"Lashed to the mast, like Admiral Farragut!" exclaimed Peter, with enthusiasm.

The butterfly twitched its wings doubtfully. "Very likely," he said, politely.

"And then?" urged Geraldine.

"Oh, I burst open—"

"Like a torpedo! Hurrah!" cried Peter.

"No, not like a torpedo. I burst decorously; it was a leisurely and dignified explosion—"

"There was a report—a slow and dignified report—wasn't there?" insisted Peter.

"Not a sound. I silently crawled out of the empty chrysalis, dried my wings by pumping them full of butterfly blood and air, and flew away to make love."

"To make love!" exclaimed Peter, scornfully.

"To make love!" repeated Geraldine. curiously.

"Certainly! I'm a very, very sentimental butterfly. So I flitted off over the clover where I saw a great many yellow butterflies flying, and, suddenly, I espied the loveliest maiden-butterfly you ever saw! Her name was Philodice."

"It is a beautiful name," said Geraldine.

"Isn't it?" said the yellow butterfly. "Our full name is Colias Philodice. You ought to see my wife! She's a beauty when she's freshly dressed."

"What does she wear?" inquired Geraldine, softly.

"Well, instead of the plain black borders to her yellow wings, which I have, she wears a front pair of wings delicately clouded with luminous black. Her feet and antennæ are pink. And when I looked at her, and she shyly glanced at me out of nineteen or twenty of her beautifully jewelled eyes, I fell in love at first sight. Oh, Peter! you have no idea what a glance from nineteen compound eyes can do."

"No, I haven't!" said Peter, coldly.

"And so you married her and lived happily ever after?" suggested Geraldine, tenderly.

"That's just exactly what I did," said the yellow butterfly. "And now our children are

growing up into fine, hardy, clover-fed caterpillars, and I hope they'll hatch into butterflies like their mother."

"Don't they always do that?" asked Peter.

The butterfly walked along Geraldine's finger, waving its wings thoughtfully.

"Not always. Now and then it happens that a negro, or black butterfly, comes from the chrysalis of a perfectly respectable yellow butterfly. Sometimes an albino, or white variety, appears. Sometimes"—the butterfly's voice trembled—"sometimes no butterfly appears."

"Why?" asked Geraldine, awed by the yellow butterfly's emotion.

"There are," said the yellow butterfly, "several wicked kinds of flies called Ichneumon flies. These miserable creatures sometimes sting our caterpillars and lay little eggs in them, and while the poor caterpillar goes on eating, the egg that the Ichneumon fly laid, hatches, and begins to eat the caterpillar.

Sometimes the caterpillar dies before it changes to a chrysalis. But whether or not it lives as long as that, it never lives to become a butterfly; and out of the chrysalis, instead of a lovely, soft, yellow-winged creature, crawls a sleek, shiny, gauze-winged and wicked-looking fly. Oh, my! it gives me a shock to think of it! Excuse me, children, while I revive myself on a proboscis full of puddle-soup."

As the yellow butterfly fluttered away to join the golden whirlwind eddying above the puddle, a sharp click! click! click! sounded through the still air, and the children looked up quickly.

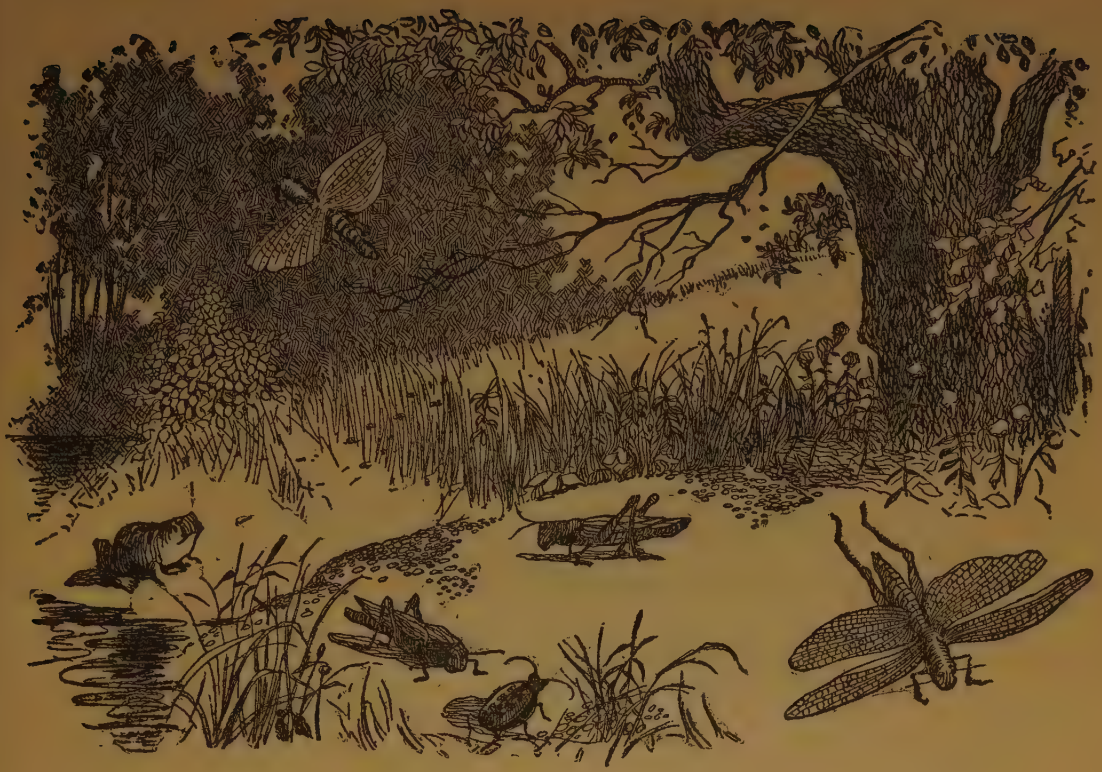
"Did you make that noise, Peter?" asked Geraldine.

"No, I didn't," said Peter. "What in the world do you suppose it could have been? Listen! There it is again!"

"Click! click! click!" came the sharp, dry, ticking notes.

"I saw it!" whispered Geraldine. "It was something yellow and brown that went drifting away into the grass. Hark!"

"Click! click! click!" And a small brown-and-yellow winged creature came flying through the air, struck smartly against Geraldine's pinafore, fell kicking and scrambling into the road, got on its six legs, and looked reproachfully at the children.



II

SINDBAD THE GRASSHOPPER

"OH, pooh! It's only a grasshopper," said Peter.

"Only a grasshopper!" cried the insect, in a shrill voice. "Sting me with hornets if I like the way you say *only* a grasshopper! As if

grasshoppers are of no importance! As if the subject of clicking grasshoppers is to be dismissed with a wild pooh! pooh!"

"Really," began Peter, "I had no idea of offending you when I said 'pooh'."

"Well, I'm glad of it, said the grasshopper, fiercely, turning round and round in the road.

"How do you make that clocking noise?" asked Peter, curiously.

"Noise!" retorted the grasshopper, disgusted, "that is not noise; that is music—good music, too."

The children, taken aback, were silent. The grasshopper walked in a stiff-legged fashion towards the puddle.

"All these idiot butterflies," he muttered, "they can't make a sound—not a single sound. But I can; and I do."

"Are there no butterflies that make sounds?" asked Geraldine, timidly.

"That's a sensible question, and I'll answer

it," replied the grasshopper. "No, there are no butterflies that can produce sounds. There's a moth in England that emits a sort of mousey squeak when you touch it, and it's the only one that does."

"Thank you for this important information," said the children, politely.

The grasshopper, evidently pleased, took a short clicking flight and alighted on Geraldine's thumb. "As for information," said the grasshopper, "I can sit here on your thumb and give you information until the crows fly home."

"Please do," said Geraldine.

"Why, the things I've seen would fill a forest, and every adventure require a tree full of leaves to record."

"You mean a book full of leaves, don't you?" suggested Peter.

"Do leaves grow on books?" inquired the grasshopper.

"Not *on* books, *in* books—that is, they don't exactly grow—"

"In my opinion you're trying to be impertinent," said the grasshopper, angrily; and Peter said nothing and turned red.

"As I was saying," continued the grasshopper, "I have seen the marvels of the world and have lived to return. Shall I recount a few of my voyages for you, Geraldine?"

"If you please," she said, timidly.

"Well then," said the grasshopper, "to begin, you know, of course, that the earth is flat and is nearly a mile long."

"It's round!" suggested Peter, but the grasshopper turned on him so fiercely that he stopped short.

"Last autumn," continued the insect, glaring at Peter out of his two globular eyes, "my mother dug a hole in the ground and laid in it a most talented and ambitious egg."

"Are all eggs talented?" asked Geraldine.

"No, not all, only grasshoppers' eggs. Last May that egg hatched out into a marvel of beauty, courage, musical genius, and ambition—in short, it hatched out into a clicking grasshopper."

The insect stared hard at Geraldine, saying, "You recognize the description of myself, I see. But wait. At first I was a—"

"Caterpillar!" said Peter, eagerly.

"Nonsense!" retorted the grasshopper, furious. "Do you take me for a butterfly? Caterpillars are good enough for moths and butterflies but not for grasshoppers! Permit me to angrily inform you that I hatched out into a small and graceful grasshopper, almost as perfect and handsome as I now am. I lacked wings, but during the early summer I changed my skin five times, and the little wing-pads on my shoulders gradually developed into those beautiful wings which I now use to waft myself melodiously through the summer sunshine."

The children stared.

"I have plenty of eyes, six legs, a fine pair of ears tucked away at the base of my fore-legs, two wing-covers, two very handsome, translucent wings, a head full of lips and jaws, and a boundless ambition—"

"To do what?" inquired Geraldine, gently.

"Well," said the grasshopper, reflectively, "towards evening I have noticed a large, bright spot overhead—about as big, I should say, as a silver poplar leaf. I desire to be able to jump high enough to alight on it and find out what it's made of and what it's for."

"Do you mean the moon?" exclaimed Peter, and he giggled.

"I don't know what you call it," replied the grasshopper, suspiciously; "and I see nothing laughable in my remark."

"Don't get angry," said Geraldine, soothingly. "Tell us more about your ambitions."

"One of them was to fly across the river,"

"'THEY CALL ME SINDBAD THE GRASSHOPPER'"

said the grasshopper, with a shudder. "I have made many attempts, and my hair-breadth escapes from awful perils are so wonderful that they call me Sindbad the Grasshopper. My first voyage was so long ago that I can scarcely recall it—it was almost a week ago!"

The insect stared solemnly at the children, who stared back as solemnly.

"It happened this way," continued the grasshopper: "I was sitting on a green and juicy stalk, eating away, and watching a cousin of mine eating gnats—a thing I never do. It had been raining that morning, and several large butterflies were drinking puddle-soup in the road, and I heard the Camberwell Beauty say to the Yellow Swallow-tail, that the mud across the river was richer and slushier and more exquisitely flavored than the mud here."

"'How about the grass stems,' I asked.

"'Oh,' said the Camberwell Beauty, waving her brownish purplish blue-embroidered and

creamy-edged wings, 'the grass over there is so luscious and the slush is so slushious that it makes my proboscis uncurl to think of it!'

"'That's the place for me!' thought I. And as I never stop to think when I start to fly, I sprang into the air and went drifting and clicking out over the river. It was a rash and terrific thing to do. As I flew clicking across the ripples a great pink and silver trout leaped right out of the water at me and I heard his jaws snap within an inch of my third pair of legs. Then I lost my head; a gray-and-white bird made a dash at me and missed me; I fell into the water and struck out frantically for shore."

The grasshopper wiped its head with both front legs, shuddering. The children listened in wrapt attention.

"I had been swimming for some seconds," continued Sindbad the Grasshopper, "when I began to feel something softly nipping at all of

my six legs. And what do you think? A swarm of miserable, gluttonous little minnows were attempting to make a breakfast off of my toes!"

"What did you do?" inquired Geraldine, anxiously.

"Do, child! I gave a tremendous kick and swam like fury. Then, under the water I saw a big, golden-scaled sunfish with scarlet and blue gill-covers sailing after me. Frantic, I scrambled madly forward, swimming for my life, but the sunfish darted at me and caught me by the hind legs, and at the same instant there came a splash in the water, and a big, brown, furry mink dived head-first at the sunfish, and the sunfish in its excitement opened its mouth, and I, half-drowned, came floating up to the surface in a whirl of water and bubbles."

"Good gracious!" cried the children, excitedly.

"It was terrible," said Sindbad the Grass-

hopper, "that first voyage of mine! I could go on relating to you how I swam and swam and kicked at nibbling minnows, how a miserable cat-bird attempted to seize me and got her wings wet for her pains, how the fierce water-spiders chased me, how the malicious whirligigs circled round and round me trying to make me dizzy, how I at last managed to crawl upon a floating chip and how I sat there for an hour, while the water swept me on and on until a friendly alder-branch reached out and stopped me and I climbed up on the river-bank, safe and sound at last—*but*—"

"But what?" whispered the children.

"But on the wrong side of the river!" said the grasshopper, sadly. "Time after time I have attempted to get to the other side, where the grass is richer and juicier, but, do you know, every time I reach the other side I find that it isn't the other side, but the other side is the other side; and it's curious, isn't it?—but

no matter on which side you are, there's always the other side, and when you get to it it isn't the other side any longer, but the other side is the other side. This," added Sindbad the Grasshopper, "is philosophy."

The children were too perplexed to reply.

"Do you know where the side that is called the other side is?" inquired the grasshopper. "I should like to find it. The grass is much juicier there."

"We don't know," said Geraldine, "we have never studied philosophy. But, if you please, would you kindly make some molasses for us before you go?"

"Molasses!" repeated the grasshopper. "Oh, you mean that brown liquid that comes out of my mouth sometimes? I only do that when I'm angry, or frightened, or hurt. It isn't molasses, it's a liquid which I use as a weapon. If a big ant nips me or a tiger-beetle attempts to seize me, I—er—I simply spit at

them and they don't like it and they let me go. And now," continued the grasshopper, "I must be on my way to look for that other side they all talk about. I could sit here for hours and tell you about the wonders I have seen on my voyages—how I once met a fox who tried to eat me; how I once saw a caterpillar that fed, not on leaves, as all other decent caterpillars do, but on tiny, downy little insects that gather in herds on alder-twigs; how sometimes I have seen a sort of creature that spends part of its life living on grasshoppers, but unless the grasshopper falls into the water and is eaten by a fish, the creature cannot become fully developed. Oh, I could go on for hours. But I won't," added the grasshopper abruptly. "Good-bye!"

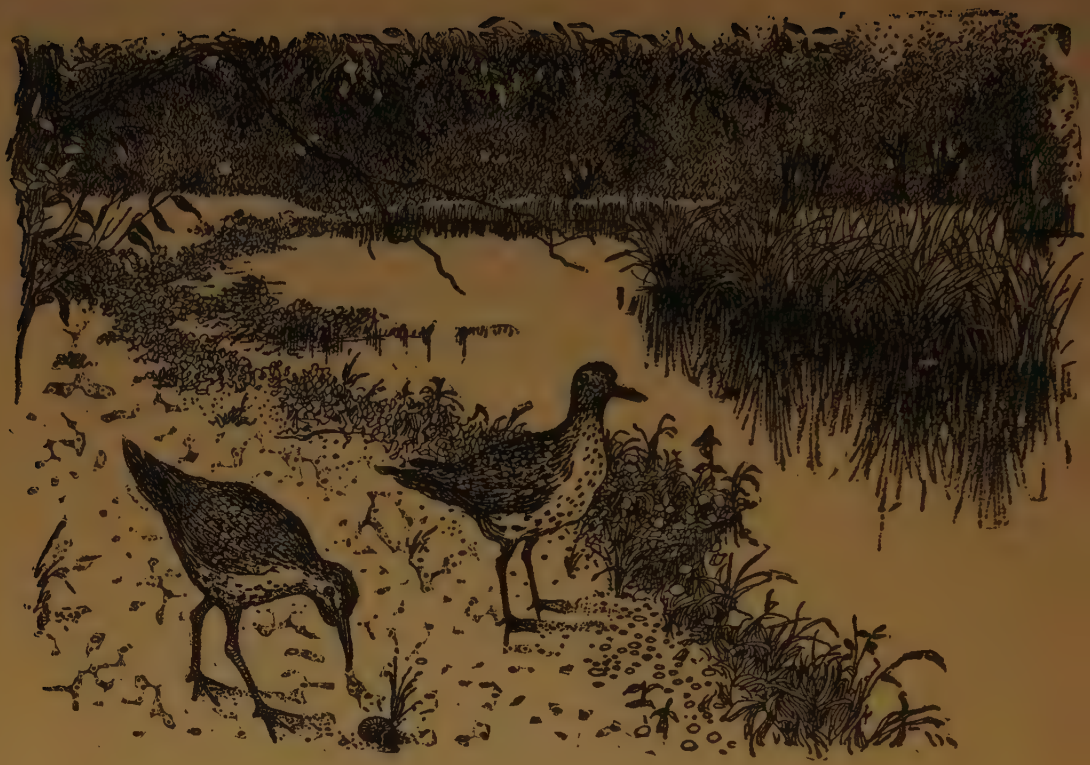
It sprang into the air and went pitching and drifting off over the river; and as far as the children could see it they heard its clear, dry "Click! click! click!"

"I hope it reaches the other side safely," said Geraldine.

"But how can it if the other side isn't the other side when it gets there?" asked Peter.

Geraldine shook her head sadly. "It's so very puzzling," she said. "Let's go down and paddle our feet; shall we?"

So they joined hands and started down the grassy bank towards the shallow water's edge; and as they reached it, and stepped out on a flat rock, part of the rock under their very feet seemed to turn into a pair of gray wings and go darting away across the water, and a sharp, keen cry broke out: "Peet! peet! peet! Tip-up! Tip-up! Tip-tip-up!"



III

PETE TIP-UP

THE children were so astonished that they almost toppled off the rock.

"Goodness!" gasped Geraldine; "do stones have wings?"

"It is certainly a bird just the color of a

stone," muttered Peter. "See! It's wheeling about now. Oh, I hope it comes back to be friendly!"

The bird was surely coming back, flitting low across the river, with curved wings bowed so that the tips seemed to touch the smooth surface of the water. And all the while its clear metallic cry rang out: "Peet! peet! peet! Tip-up! Tip-up! Tip-tip-up!"

As the bird neared the rock it wheeled and alighted at Geraldine's feet. There came a flash of white as it tossed its long pointed wings, ran across the rock, and began to bow and tip-up and bob in a most extraordinary manner.

"You frightened me," said the bird; "some of those wicked village children always throw pebbles at me, and my legs are so dainty and slender that the least blow might break them."

"We never throw stones at beautiful birds," said Geraldine, quickly.

"Oh, I know that!" cried the bird. "You are those little In-door Children, aren't you—Geraldine and Peter?"

"Yes," they said, "we are Geraldine and Peter. Will you please to tell us who you are and why you are just the color of a stone and why you walk around bobbing and dipping in that see-saw way?"

"Why, of course I'll tell you," replied the bird, pleasantly. "I have several names, you know. The village children call me Tip-up, See-saw, and Tilt-up, Teeter-tail, Peet-weet, Teeter, Sand-lark—oh, I've forgotten half the names people give me. As a matter of fact, my foreign name is Actitis Macularia, and my American name is the Spotted Sand-piper. My wife calls me Pete, however, so you children might as well call me Pete as anything."

"Pete," said Geraldine, shyly, "why are you just the color of a stone?"

"Aha!" laughed the sand-piper, "that's the

joke of it. I'm so nearly the color of a stone that those big, sharp-eyed hawks that go sailing 'round and 'round up there among the clouds can't see me. My color is my protection. Why, children, you have no idea how often I've escaped troubles of various sorts by keeping perfectly quiet on a stone or on a sandy shore or among withered grasses in a pasture. You did not see me; you almost stepped on me before I darted away."

"Are you a kind of snipe?" asked Peter.

"Oh, a kind of snipe—yes, but snipe fly differently, for one thing. Besides, snipe are game-birds, but no gentleman would fire at me."

"Are you married? inquired Geraldine, gently.

"Yes," cried the sand-piper, eagerly, "and my wife is the prettiest thing you ever saw! She's up there, sitting on our eggs."

"Where?" cried the children, excited.

"In the river-meadow. You see, we're nesting in a hurry because we want to bring up two broods this season."

"Oh, *could* we see her — and the eggs?" pleaded Geraldine, softly; "we will be so very, very quiet, and we won't frighten her, we promise!"

The sand-piper looked perplexed and scratched his sleek gray cheek with one wet foot.

"Well," he said, doubtfully, "I'll take you over. But our nest is not much to look at — nothing at all elaborate, like those pretty hanging nests that the orioles weave in your elm-trees."

"You can't alight in a tree, can you?" said Peter.

"I? Bless your heart, I can and I do! It always astonishes people, too, who never thought it possible for any of the snipe family to alight in trees. But I do it; sometimes when my

wife is dozing on the nest in the grass I hop up on a tree or a fence, or even on the ridge-pole of a barn, and I sing very sweetly, 'Peet! peet! tweet!'—oh, I'm not such a bad singer. They call me sand-lark, too, because in the nesting season I go soaring up into the sunshine, singing in the manner of an English skylark—that is," added the sand-piper, modestly, "I don't, of course, sing nearly as well, but my wife likes it."

"You are the dearest, friendliest little bird!" cried Geraldine, impulsively stooping to touch and smooth the silky gray wings.

"Thanks," said the sand-piper. "I see no sense in sulking. Travellers like myself usually learn to get along with people."

"Are you a traveller?" asked Peter, surprised.

"Well, more or less of a traveller. I've been as far north as Hudson Bay in summer, and as far south as Brazil in winter. In winter

I usually stop along anywhere south of South Carolina or Georgia, and often, in summer, I stay south of Canada."

"And when do you build your nest?" asked Geraldine.

"Oh, any time between April and September. It depends on where we are. We usually build it near rivers; you see, we eat snails and worms, and one finds the juiciest and plumpest food near brooks and rivers."

"And why do you tilt up and bob and bow all the while you are talking to us?" asked Geraldine. "Is it politeness?"

"It is probably that," said the sand-piper, bowing rapidly to Geraldine—"it is no doubt an inborn and instinctive mania for good manners. I bow to everybody and everything—to my wife, to you, to the birds who come here to drink, to the water, to my own reflection in the water—why, I even bow several times to the snails I am about to eat. Polished man-

ners please and are not difficult to acquire. Why not be polished while you're about it?"

"How true!" said the children, reverently.

"Hereafter I shall bow to my breakfast every morning," said Peter. "It is good practice to bow to every muffin and every fish-ball."

"The best practice in the world," assented the sand-piper. "And now, children, if you care to meet my wife and inspect our domestic arrangements, I will lead you."

The sand-piper spread his gray-and-white barred wings and flitted off in a long curve; the children hastily followed, running along the river-bank.

"Peet! Peet! Peet!" they heard the sharp, sweet call, and followed it out into the meadow until they caught a glimpse of two flashing wings tossed up in the sunshine. Then they heard another voice exclaim: "Pete! What is all that noise of footsteps in the grass?"

"Only Peter and Geraldine, my dear," re-

plied the sand-piper, soothingly. "They are dying to see our nest and the eggs. May they?"

The children stood, hand in hand, breathless with excitement; for there, on the ground, under a bunch of tall grasses, was a little gray bird looking up at them, slender head raised. The bird's eyes were beautiful and fearless.

"Bow to her," whispered Geraldine; and the children began to bow and curtesy rapidly.

"They are very polite children, Pete," said his wife, rising and beginning to return the salutations by a series of bows and dips.

"Oh!" cried Geraldine, enchanted. "Peter! Peter! Do you see that dear little nest all lined with grass? And those ivory-tinted eggs speckled with brown? Oh, Mrs. Pete, it is the most wonderful nest I ever saw!"

The sand-piper bowed gratefully.

"We hope," observed Pete, "to raise a number of children before we go south in October.

"'OH, MRS. PETE, IT IS THE MOST WONDERFUL NEST I EVER SAW!'"

It makes quite a flock, you see, and it is much jollier travelling with so many than just going alone."

"When the eggs hatch," said his wife, "the babies are certainly pretty—just little balls of down. And you have no idea how lively they are! Why, they're no bigger than spiders, and they run like a flash all over the meadow and the river shore."

"May we see your babies when the eggs hatch?" begged the children, in raptures.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Pete, carefully resuming her place on the nest. "Pete will let you know some day, won't you, dear?"

"With extreme pleasure," replied her polite husband, bowing madly to everybody. "Good-morning, children. It has been a great pleasure to us."

Profoundly impressed, the children backed off through the meadow bowing and curtesying repeatedly so long as the sand-pipers were in

sight. And long after they had disappeared amid the meadow grasses the children heard a keen, sweet song floating from the distance, a faint echo of the heavenly song of a soaring skylark. Suddenly the song was silenced; a harsh cry, something between a squealing and mewing, sounded from the river.

"What's that?" faltered Geraldine, startled, as a great shadow swept across the grass and the loud, querulous cry broke out close overhead.

IV

THE MARSH-HAWK

"IT'S a hawk!" cried Peter, looking up. "Isn't he a beauty!"

"Hear him squeal," said Geraldine. "And how he flies, wheeling and turning above every clump of bushes. See! He's circling over

the river now. Here he comes again! Oh, speak to him, Peter. I do want to ask him something."

The great hawk approached, gliding through the air just over the tops of the tall grasses and meadow flowers, and Peter called to him as he passed: "Oh, hawk, would you mind coming a trifle nearer? My little sister Geraldine wishes to ask you something."

The hawk soared upward, balanced on broad, grayish wings, and hung a moment above the children; then the air fairly whistled as the great bird slanted and swooped.

"Hello, Peter! How goes it, Geraldine?" he said, genially, alighting on the remains of an old stump which was almost concealed among sprays of elder and meadow-sweet.

The children bowed politely to the hawk, who fixed on them an amused and bright-yellow pair of eyes.

He was a magnificent bird. His plumage

"THE HAWK SOARED UPWARD, BALANCED ON BROAD, GRAYISH WINGS"

was bluish-gray and pearl-gray and silver-gray touched with bronze; his curved beak and talons jet-black. "Did this little lady desire to speak to me?" asked the hawk, with careless good-humor.

"Do you mean me?" inquired Geraldine.

"Of course. You're a little lady, aren't you?"

"I only wished to know," she said, "whether it was you who carried off one of our dear little chickens yesterday. Was it?"

"Nonsense!" cried the hawk, greatly amused; "I don't steal chickens, my child! I'm a marsh-hawk."

"And don't marsh-hawks steal chickens?" asked Peter.

The hawk shook his head and burst into a loud, harsh squeal, which, no doubt, is the way all marsh-hawks laugh.

"No, no," he said, "I'm no chicken-thief, Peter. I'm no enemy to farmers. I wish the

farmers would get it through their heads, too, before they run for their shot-guns every time I come sailing along the river-meadows."

"Well, if you don't eat chickens, what do you eat, then?" asked Geraldine, curiously.

"What do I eat? Why, I go mousing about over the fields for mice. I dote on mice. I treat myself to a frog or two, sometimes a lizard, sometimes even a grasshopper. But that is about the limit of my bill of fare. Mice, mice, toujours mice. Why, I'm the greatest benefit to farmers; but they're too stupid to understand."

And the hawk ruffled up all his soft feathers and blinked amiably at the children.

"Are you cross-eyed?" asked Peter, suddenly.

"No," said the hawk, "but my eyes are pretty close together, and my beak is close to my eyes. Sometimes, when I realize what a good-looking bird I am, I try a view of my

own features, but all I can see is my beak, so I look at that. Geraldine, I wish you would tell me how I might spend a few hours daily looking at myself."

"A mirror—" began Geraldine.

"Oh yes, I know. I sit by the river and gaze at my exquisite features sometimes, but the little, soft, mushy tadpoles come wiggling about and the idiotic sunfish stare, and the minnows gape, and I don't care for it. I'd like to get into some position where I could see my own face without looking into a mirror full of polliwogs."

"My mirror isn't full of polliwogs," said Geraldine, laughing.

"Then it's full of finny fishes or water-spiders," observed the hawk. "Oh, I know; you can't tell me anything about mirrors; I've lived in River-land too long. Hark! Was that a mouse moving in the long grass?"

The children listened intently; the hawk

bent his bright gaze on a clump of early golden-rod. Suddenly he pounced; the children heard the snap of his polished beak, then the bird rose from the grass and flapped slowly back to his perch upon the stump again.

"Merely a grasshopper," he said, smacking his beak, reflectively—"but a rather good flavor—not bad, I assure you."

"Oh," said Geraldine, "I hope it wasn't our friend Sindbad!"

"And who, if you please, is your friend Sindbad?"

"A clicking grasshopper," said Peter. "Was that a clicking grasshopper you swallowed?"

"No," said the hawk, "it was one of those tender, mushy, green ones, with long whiskers—the kind that tune up at night and keep respectable hawks awake. That ought to teach him a lesson, I think."

"But what's the good of the lesson to him now?" asked Geraldine.

The hawk only shook his head, muttering, "Teach him a lesson — teach him not to fiddle tunes with his hind-legs when I'm sleepy."

"Are you married, too?" asked Geraldine.

"Married two? Not much. I married once. Marsh-hawks only marry once in a lifetime. And you just ought to see my wife, Geraldine. She's mostly bronze in color, like a young marsh-hawk. My gracious, what a figure she does cut in the sunshine when the sun catches her plumage!"

"I should like to see her," said Geraldine, eagerly.

"Well, she's attending to the young ones just now," said the hawk, "and I must confess that she is rather quick-tempered when nesting. So I don't think I'll invite you around for a while, if you don't mind."

"Are the eggs already hatched?" asked Peter. "What color were they?"

"They were laid in May," said the hawk—"six of them—the most beautiful bluish-white eggs you ever saw. My wife and I came up rather early from South Carolina this spring, and we searched all River-land for a decent place to build. Finally we selected a spot on the overgrown pasture above the rapids, and we built a rather flimsy nest out of hay and twigs. I don't know why it is, but we marsh-hawks can't build decent nests."

"Which tree is it in?" asked Peter.

"It isn't in a tree; it's on the ground," said the hawk. "You people are always getting us marsh-hawks mixed up with the sharp-shinned hawk and the red-tailed hawk, and those worst robbers of all, the great blue darter and the goshawk. They all build their nests in trees, all, especially the two last, are chicken-thieves of the deepest dye, and all of them sail and circle and soar high in the sky. I don't, neither does my wife, except when we are

courting each other. Then we rise above the clouds sometimes, and float and drift through the sunlit azure for hours."

The hawk scratched his head reflectively.

"I ought to be after some of those slate-colored field-mice," he said. "The children will be squealing for their dinner presently. Good-bye, children. Try to make a few people understand that we marsh-hawks, or mouse-hawks, or harriers, or whatever you call us, are not robbers, but that we rid the fields of mice and insects. Whenever you see a big hawk sailing along slowly over the tops of the grass—and particularly if you see a round, white patch of feathers on the back, you may be pretty sure it's only a good-natured marsh-hawk, and there's no need to run for the chicken-yard with a double-barrelled shot-gun. Good-bye."

"We'll remember. Good-bye!" cried the children.

The hawk spread its broad wings and floated off over the meadow; and far away the children heard its strange hunting-cry long after it was lost to sight amid the thickets of River-land.

V

IN RIVER-LAND

THE distant cry of the marsh-hawk was now being industriously imitated by a cat-bird flitting restlessly through the willows along the river's leafy banks; "Miau! miau! miau!" came the plaintive mewing; "Meow!

meow-w!" retorted Peter and Geraldine, laughing delightedly, until the nesting birds in the alders broke out into protest.

"For goodness sake stop that noise!" cried a redstart, fluttering from branch to branch with a flash of his black-and-flame-colored plumage — "you'll be drawing all the hawks and cats and blue-jays in the neighborhood if you keep up that miauling!"

"There has not been such a racket on the Kennyetto since the red-winged blackbirds left," coughed a cuckoo, exasperated.

"I'm trembling so on my nest that I'll addle my eggs," wailed a small, sweet voice. "Do be quiet, children, and let that silly cat-bird alone."

"Do you hear what the thrush says?" piped a delicious voice from the top of the swamp-elm; and a bird with black, white, and bright rose-colored plumage broke out into an ecstasy of musical protest.

Far and wide floated the lovely song of the grosbeak, stilling the plaintive or indignant murmurs of the birds; a small bunting ruffled up its purple-and-sapphire plumage and composed itself to listen—a living jewel in the sunshine; the irritated Kuk! Kuk! Kuk! of the brown-and-white cuckoo was silenced; thrush, sparrow, and fire-flecked redstart subsided upon their nests; the slate-gray cat-bird, deeply mortified, every feather adroop, sat quietly in the water-willows, mute as its own shadow.

"They're all nesting along here," whispered Geraldine to Peter. "We'd better go farther down the river to that pool below the foot-bridge."

So they stole away along the edges of the flowering thickets where clumps of blue-beeches spread flecked shadows over the meadow—past the bullrush pool, where brilliant dragon-flies sailed on sparkling wings, through beds of mint

and scented bergamot, to the edge of the still pool below the foot-bridge.

"Now we can paddle our feet without making nuisances of ourselves," cried Geraldine, tucking up her skirts. "Do you know, Peter, that whenever I'm quiet for more than a minute there's something inside of me that begins to laugh and sing and shout; and then I open my mouth and out it comes."

Peter lay down on the grass, and gravely kicked up his heels. "I wonder," he said, "why it is I sometimes roll around like a colt?"

"I wonder why *I* do," said Geraldine, doing it.

"I wonder," said Peter, sitting up on the grassy river-bank and beginning to untie his shoes—"I wonder what all those little things are whirling around and around on top of the water. Look, Geraldine!"

"They're whirligigs," said Geraldine, tugging at her stockings.

"But what are whirligigs?" persisted Peter; "and why do they act like that? Watch them, Geraldine; see them go darting and zigzagging and circling around like skaters on the lake in winter."

"Wait, I'll catch one," said Geraldine, dipping her white feet in the water. "Goodness! See how they scatter when I reach out! Come back, you poor, silly, shiny whirligigs; we're certainly not going to eat you!"

"There's nothing certain about it!" retorted a thin and watery little voice. "Other people eat us; how do we know that you won't do the same?"

"What!" exclaimed the children, horrified; "who eats such a thing as a whirligig?"

"People in Mexico," said the whirligig, wrathfully. "They eat our eggs, and they catch us, too, and feed us to their chickens."

Peter made a wry face; Geraldine shuddered.

"It gratifies me," added the whirligig, "to

observe your indignation, and I feel reasonably assured that you would not attempt to eat us just because you know we are so delicious."

"Please never to mention the idea again," said Geraldine, faintly. And a hundred thin and watery but grateful little voices chorused their thanks.

"What are you, anyhow?" asked Peter, curiously, as the school of whirligigs came swarming back to the still clear pool and clustered together just beyond where the children's feet hung ankle deep in the water.

"We won't try to catch you again," added Geraldine, "because our mother has taught us not to make nuisances of ourselves; but won't you please tell us why you all go spinning round and round on the water?"

"Why, we're chasing all kinds of tiny water creatures," said the whirligig. "When we catch them we eat them. That's why we all whirl around on the water."

"WE'RE CHASING ALL KINDS OF TINY WATER CREATURES,' SAID THE WHIRLIGIG"

"Is the water full of live things?" asked Geraldine, peering down at the bottom sands. "I never thought there was anything in the river except a few fishes."

"The idea!" said the whirligig, scornfully. "Why, the river is the most sociable and densely populated place in the world. Use your eyes, Geraldine. The top of the water is swarming with different kinds of gnats, flies, eggs, larvæ, and whirligigs; over there is a bunch of cousins of mine who always spin about on their backs, never on their stomachs; and there's my big cousin Nepa, the valiant water-scorpion. He's a fierce fighter, I can tell you, and those goggle-eyed minnows over there had better keep an eye on him. Then, under the flat stones on the river-bed lurks the giant water-bug; and the minnows had better look out for him, too. Oh, there's plenty of company here — water-tigers that turn into dragon-flies, a large family named Dobson

that lives for three years as big, black, wriggling, biting grubs before they crawl out on land and turn into great, soft, lace-winged and double-horned flies, bigger than many dragonflies. Why, the river is full of creatures, swimming on the surface, under the surface, crawling on the bottom, burrowing through the mud. I'll venture to say that this river is the liveliest spot in the world."

"Do you ever have terrible wars?—hand-to-hand fights?" asked Peter, hopefully.

"Fights! Well, I should say so—it's all one endless and continuous fight. A saucy minnow comes wriggling along, slaps my cousin Nepa, the water-scorpion, over the head with its tail, and whiz! they're at it. Ten to one my cousin Nepa eats the minnow, too."

"You don't fight, I hope!" exclaimed Geraldine, anxiously.

"Oh, don't I! I fight like mad. Look at me. I'm built to fight. I'm shaped like a

boat; my two hind-legs are like paddles, and I go racing about after insects that fall into the water or insects that live in the water. I attack very small fish sometimes, but it's a tough job, although I've a sharp beak strong enough to sting like a hornet."

"You couldn't sting us, could you?" demanded Peter, amazed.

"Of course I could. So could my cousin the back-swimmer. I tell you, Peter, we're equipped for trouble and we're always hunting for it. I can dive like a fish, and when I dive I carry down a lot of air with me so I can breathe."

"How can you carry air?" cried Geraldine.

"The air clings to the fine hairs which cover my body; watch me!" And the whirligig suddenly dived, swimming along under water.

"Your body looks as though it were silver-plated!" exclaimed Peter.

"That's the air I carry," said the whirligig,

coming to the surface and darting and gyrating about between the children's feet; "that glistening silvery film along my legs and stomach is nothing but air; and I carry it down and breathe it through little holes called spiracles in my sides and thighs."

"Is there anything else you can do?" asked Peter, respectfully.

"Certainly. I can crawl about on land. I can fly like a beetle—I have wings folded up under these shiny, polished wing-covers. Often I leave the river at night after a shower and go flying off to find some puddle where there ought to be food. Then I spin around on the surface of the puddle until the puddle dries up; then I crawl out, spread my wings, and fly off to a new place."

"I had no idea," exclaimed Peter, "that a whirligig could do all these things!"

"All whirligigs can," said the insect, proudly, "and there are some thirty or forty different

kinds whose first names are like mine—Corixa. You can call me whirligig, water-boatman, pond-skipper, or whatever you like, but my real name is Corixa, if anybody should make kind inquiries."

"There's one thing you can't do," said Peter, thoughtfully.

"What's that?" demanded the whirligig.

"You can't sing!"

"Oh yes, I can," retorted the insect, jauntily. "Listen."

The whirligig began to strike its horny nose with both front feet; at first the children heard nothing, then, gradually stealing on the ear, a clear note grew, sounding louder and louder.

"That isn't very bad, is it?" asked the whirligig.

"It's rather pretty," said Geraldine, politely.

The insect whirled round and round several times in triumph.

"What do you do when winter comes?" inquired Peter.

"We dive down and burrow into the mud under the water. When spring comes we crawl out again, swim up to the top, and begin to look for a new crop of trouble."

"Don't you ever do anything but eat and fight?" asked Geraldine.

"We lay eggs," replied the whirligig—"bunches of eggs attached to the stems of water plants. Those cousins of mine, who spend their lives swimming on their backs, lay their eggs inside the stems of water plants; so do the water-scorpions. But my other relative, the giant water-bug, has an awful time with eggs."

"How?" asked the children.

"Why, you see, his wife is bigger and stronger than he is, and she's a very advanced and determined female—full of modern notions about the care of children. So when she's

ready to lay a bunch of eggs she seizes on her amazed husband, and, spite of his frantic struggles, she lays the eggs all over him!"

"But what becomes of him?" cried the bewildered children.

"He becomes nothing but a walking incubator, and mopes about weighted down with a load of eggs, while his wife goes gadding about. Isn't it awful? I tell you I'll think several times before I marry." And the whirligig went circling and zigzagging off among the shiny swarm that whirled over the placid surface of the pool.

"I don't think I should ever marry if I were a water-bug," observed Peter, paddling his feet in the cool, clear water.

"If I were a water-bug," reflected Geraldine, "I should marry, I think—but I should never, never be cruel enough to lay eggs all over my husband."

There was a silence broken by an exclama-

tion from Peter: "If that mosquito comes humming around me again, I'll defend myself!"

"You wouldn't *kill* it!" cried Geraldine, reproachfully. "Have you forgotten what we have learned about destroying life that we cannot replace?"

"That's silly!" snapped the mink, poking its furry muzzle out of a cleft in the rocks opposite. "It is the business of Indoor people to destroy every house-fly and every mosquito they can."

"Why?" asked the children, astonished.

"Because they carry sickness in their miserable bodies," said the mink, sharply.

"I can't help it," said Geraldine; "it is wicked to destroy anything alive."

"Then why do you take medicine when you have a cold, or when you have measles or mumps or whooping-cough?" demanded the mink.

"Medicine!" repeated Geraldine; "what

harm do I do by taking medicine? I don't kill anything, do I?"

"Indeed, you do; you kill millions and millions of tiny live creatures when you swallow medicine."

"Where are they?"

"In your body, child. Sickness is caused by millions of living things, so small that only a most powerful microscope can show them. While they are alive and increasing in your blood, you are ill and you grow worse; as soon as you take the sort of medicine that kills them you are better; and you get well when the medicine has killed them all."

"Good gracious! We didn't know that!" exclaimed the children.

"It's so," squeaked the mink. "And what's the difference between whacking a mosquito or a house-fly, both of which are full of these little living things that will make you ill, and pouring several doses of medicine into your stomachs

after the mosquito or the house-fly have alighted on you and spread the little creatures that make sickness all through your skin and blood?"

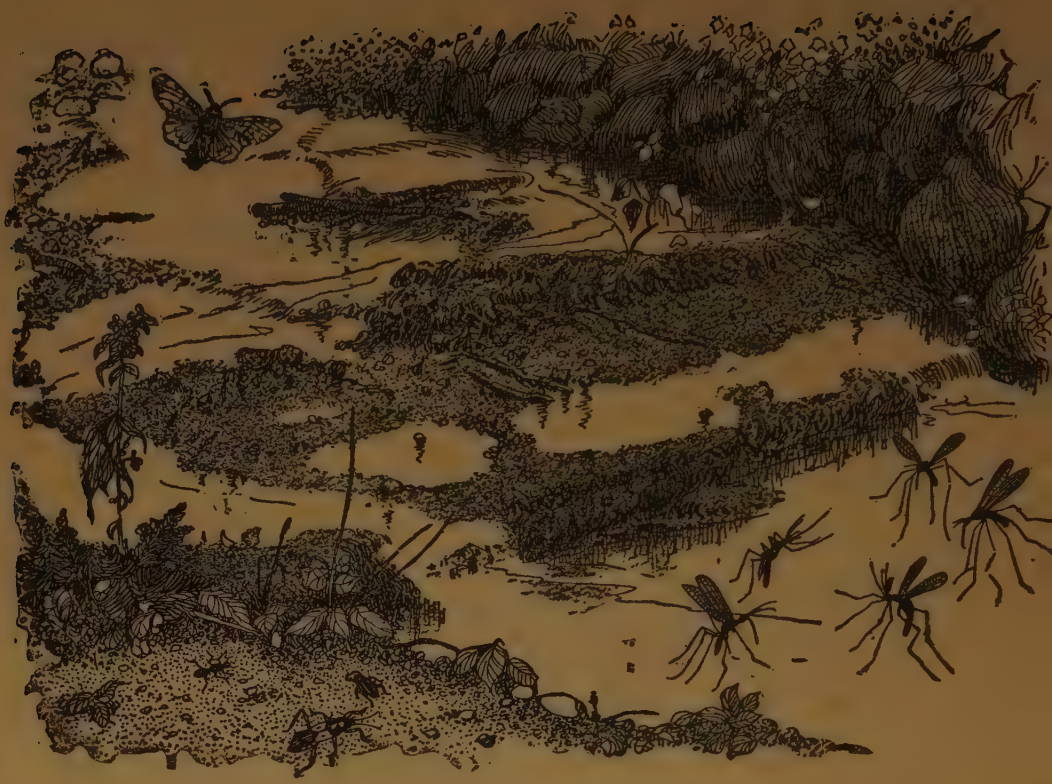
"After this," said Peter, wrathfully, "I shall whack every mosquito and every house-fly that I see."

"It is silly not to," said the mink. "It is nothing but a proper precaution. Now, for instance, it would be cruel to destroy a bee or a wasp just because they sting. It is your business to leave them alone. All creatures defend themselves when attacked, and it is your business not to attack. But you are always right in defending yourselves; therefore, common-sense bids you defend yourselves always against disease-laden mosquitoes and that most filthy of insects, the common house-fly."

"Tee-e! he-e! tee-e! he-e!" sang a tiny, thin, malicious voice, vibrating in Peter's ear. "Tee-e! Z-z-z-z! Let old furry-muzzle talk! What do I care? I'll bite him, too, if I catch

him asleep on a sunny log. I'll bite everybody and everything!"

"Whack!" came Peter's hand; but the mosquito sailed off over the stream, hung above the water for a while to tantalize the hungry minnows, then drifted like a winged mote to a willow twig bending above the stream and alighted on a leaf, head down, hind-legs sticking straight up in the air.



VI

THE OUTLAW

"I BELIEVE that mosquito is laughing at me!" said Peter, indignantly.

"I am," hummed the mosquito. "Z-z-z! I nearly bit you that time, Peter. Look out or I'll bite you yet!"

"In all Outdoor-land," said Geraldine, sorrowfully, "you are the only really wicked creature that we have met."

"Wicked? Of course I'm wicked," sang the mosquito, gleefully. "Am I not an outlaw? Is not every Indoor hand against me? And every Outdoor creature fears and hates me; horses and cattle lash at me with their legs and tails, lesser beasts snap at me or try to roll over on me and flatten me out, birds and insects eat me, the fish lie low under the surface waiting for me to lay my eggs. Ha! ha! Who cares? I'm a fierce freebooter, and whole nations tremble and take counsel together how they may resist me. I lie hidden, waiting for live things; I terrify, I rule, I close entire regions to civilization. It's a merry life while it lasts! *Z-z-z!*"

"Then," said Peter, slowly, "you are what is called a public enemy."

"Exactly," said the mosquito; "my stinging

apparatus is against every one and everything —even juicy stems and succulent flowers I pierce, sucking their veins."

"Is their nothing good about you?" asked Geraldine, in despair.

"I have not one single redeeming trait," replied the mosquito, proudly. "Even a housefly has a shadow of an excuse for his sins, but I have none. Why, as a matter of fact, you know I can live just as well as not without feeding on Indoor people. I was born to the simple nourishment of the moisture and juices found in succulent stems and leaves."

"And yet you deliberately annoy live creatures!" said Peter.

"Deliberately, persistently—Z-z-z!"

"Have you no wife to influence you for the better?" asked Geraldine, almost in tears.

"Wife? No, but I have a husband who doesn't amount to much," replied the mosquito, tartly.

"'ARE THERE ANY HARMLESS MOSQUITOES?' ASKED PETER, QUIETLY"

The horrified children were silent.

"He never bites anything, you know; he sips a little moisture now and then, I fancy, yet, as a matter of fact, I never saw him feed at all. But I feed!" added the mosquito, viciously.

"Are there any harmless mosquitoes?" asked Peter, quietly. "I only want to know so that I may spare them in battle."

"Well," said the mosquito, carelessly, "there are five families of mosquitoes in this country, and of these five the Anopheles family is the worst. There are three kinds of Anopheles mosquitoes. This is the way they give you malaria: A mosquito bites an Indoor person who has malaria; the tiny malarial creatures are sucked in by the mosquito, and inside the mosquito they immediately begin to breed. Then the next Indoor person whom the mosquito stings is sure to get a big dose of those malarial creatures in his blood, and he becomes

ill. Simple, isn't it? — simple, but effective. Z-z-z!"

The children stared in speechless indignation.

"The Anopheles mosquito usually rests with his head and body at right angles to whatever he is standing on. In other words, he stands on his head," continued the mosquito.

"Why," said Peter, hoarsely.

"Why not?" asked the mosquito.

"Heads were not made to stand on," said Peter.

"Matter of opinion," observed the mosquito. "Now, for example, what do you use your ears for?"

"To hear with, of course."

"Well," remarked the mosquito, "when I'm still in a wingless state I use my ears to breathe through. It's purely a matter of taste and opinion, you see."

"Don't you always have wings?" demanded Peter.

"No. First, I'm a single tiny egg floating amid a flat mass of other eggs on the water. In sixteen hours I'm a larva—what you children call a 'wiggler'—you've often seen wigglers wriggling and jerking about in stagnant water standing in old troughs or barrels or kettles."

"I wish I'd known what wigglers were when I saw them in the rain-water barrel," said Peter, darkly.

The mosquito laughed and went on: "Seven days we wriggle as wigglers, coming up to the surface to breathe every now and then, and eating our fill of food so small that you could not even see it. Then we turn into pupas and float for two days more before we burst our shells and dry our wings and go sailing away on a biting expedition, full-fledged outlaws! Z-z-z!"

"Anyhow," said Peter, drawing a long breath, "winter will do what my hand failed to do."

"Not much," said the mosquito, gleefully.

"I can hide away in some warm nook when the snow flies, and come out fresh and naughty as ever in the spring. Listen next May and you'll hear my cheery hum—not high-pitched, like my cousin Culex, but low in tone. Don't worry about me, children. I can look out for Anopheles number one—"

"Snap!" A small gray bird hung hovering in the air, darting its head from side to side.

"Where's that mosquito?" cried the little gray flycatcher, excitedly. "I snapped, but missed. Where is that mosquito?"

The children were silent. They saw the wicked Anopheles flying away as fast as its wings could work, but they were fair-minded children, who never told tales. Besides, three against one was not fair, even though the one was a sinner like the outlaw mosquito.

"Did you hear my bill snap?" asked the little flycatcher, settling on a twig and looking carefully around for the mosquito.

"I should think we did!" began Geraldine. "I had no idea such a tiny bird could be so noisy. Oh, please wait a moment—"

But the bird darted off like a flash, calling, "There's the mosquito! Excuse my haste, children!" and in another moment the clear, dry snap of its bill sounded from the thicket on the other side of the river. But whether or not the little gray flycatcher caught the wicked mosquito that time the children never knew, because neither the mosquito nor the bird came back to tell them.

"Did you ever, ever believe that any live thing in Outdoor-land could be as horrid as that mosquito?" asked Geraldine, sadly. "And the flies, too—the cosey, cheery, buzzy little house-flies—did you believe they were full of dreadful germs? I suppose we'll have to whack them now."

"The way to do," said Peter, "is to have

screens. Then they can't come into the house, and then, you see, we won't ever be obliged to destroy any living thing!"

"That's the best way!" cried Geraldine, cheering up immediately. "I couldn't bear the idea of harming anything."

"But, of course, we must be brave enough to do our duty and whack any fly that gets in," said Peter.

"Ye-s," said Geraldine, "but please do my part for me—won't you, Peter?"

Peter nodded, splashing his legs thoughtfully in the water.

"I shall miss the flies," he murmured. "They're good company when mademoiselle reads to-morrow's lesson through for us in advance. And they most always sit on her nose, and then she slaps at them and her glasses fall off—"

"Mother says we must try not to see anything funny in that," said Geraldine.

"I didn't say it was funny," retorted Peter; "I only said I should miss the flies. Once mademoiselle found me making a fly-cage out of a leaf from your copy-book; and do you know what she did? She made me write a verse in French about flies."

"Did you?" giggled Geraldine.

"I had to."

"What did you write?"

"I wrote:

"'Une mouche
Dans la bouche
N'est pas très commode;
C'est louche,
C'est—'

and I couldn't find any rhyme but 'touche,' and that made no sense, and there seemed to be no sense in anything that rhymed with 'commode,' so that's all I did; and mademoiselle wanted to know where I had heard the word 'louche,' and I told her I heard mother's

maid say it about some friend of hers, and that's all that happened."

"That was enough," mused Geraldine, watching the little minnows swimming against the slow current. "I adore poetry, but not that kind you made. Ugh! N'en parlons plus, tu sais—" And she shrugged her shoulders and shook her curly head in dainty disgust.

Long, bluish shadows were lying across the meadow now; the sun hung low over the sapphire hills, and the sunlight was tinted with a deeper glow where it slanted through the trees of River-land.

Bird after bird began to sing, orioles fluting from maple and elm, bobolinks carolling ecstatically as they hovered over the wet meadow; the heavenly note of a hermit-thrush floated faintly from the hill-side pines, and, high on the tip of a tall balm-of-Gilead, a rosy grosbeak poured forth its lovely melody, echoed far away by the sweet, minor calling of the white-throat.

RIVER-LAND

River-land was astir; in the mill-pond above the swinging bridge pickerel were leaping into the air—splash! splash! Old mother musk-rat, with her sleek mouth full of juicy stems and grasses, came silently swimming down-stream, steering along without a sound, now in the middle, now close under the overhanging banks. Turtle after turtle left a floating water-soaked log under the dam and swam off shore-ward.

In the golden bands of sunlight that slanted across the stream clouds of gnats danced aerial jigs, unmindful of the pretty cherry-birds in their silken drab-and-yellow-barred plumage, who came silently hovering over the river to snap at the dizzy dancers.

"Look! What is this flying up the river?" whispered Geraldine, tugging at Peter's sleeve.

Whirring along low over the calm surface of the water came a heavy bird, neck outstretched, stocky little wings fanning the air so rapidly

that, as it neared the children, the whistling, whimpering sound of its wings increased to a shrill whish-h-h! The bird struck the water close to their feet, splashed about for a moment, sousing head and wings in the stream, wagged its tail, ducked its head again and again, and, flinging a rainbow of tinted spray from wing and crest, glanced up demurely at the children, saying: "Good-evening, Geraldine! Good-evening, Peter! What do you think of my new summer plumage?"

VII

THE WOOD-DUCK

NEVER, in all their lives, had the children seen such an exquisitely beautiful bird. Its crested head flashed with every color of the rainbow; the bill was pink and orange, the eye crimson, the legs yellow, the breast

a rich mahogany dotted with snowy white. Purple and green lights played over its folded wings; its head was all tufted with gold and green enamelled feathers glossed with iridescent azure.

"Are you a parrot?" stammered Peter, breathing deeply in his excitement.

"Why, no, you silly child; I'm a wood-duck. Don't you remember last autumn, when your father wouldn't let old Phelim shoot at a little flock of ducks on the river, because he said that nobody with a shred of decency would kill a wood-duck?"

"But those ducks were gray and brown," said Peter, "and you're every beautiful color that I ever dreamed of!"

"That's because I have on my summer clothes—my bridal plumage," said the duck, with a soft, twittering chuckle. "But I'm a wood-duck, just the same, and I was out there on the river with my wife and children, just

friendly that we often alight in people's duck-ponds and even follow the waddling domestic flock up into the very poultry-yard. Why, even in the limits of New York City we still nest; and if I were certain that these whirligigs would not tell the rattle-pate kingfisher, and that the kingfisher would not gabble the secret up and down the entire river, I could tell you exactly where some cousins of mine have nested for years, and still nest, within the city boundary of Greater New York."

"Dear me!—goodness me!" sighed Geraldine; "how could anybody be so cruel as to fire a gun at you?"

"They do, all the same," said the wood-duck, shaking its jewelled head solemnly. "Why, only last February I had a narrow escape in the Florida flatwoods when one morning, just at daylight, some quail-hunters shot at me as I dashed through the trees towards a cypress-swamp. Guns are bad

enough," continued the wood-duck, scratching its golden cheek with its yellow toe and preening its chocolate-brown-and-white-dotted breast—"bad enough in their way. But down there in Florida a wood-duck must keep his eyes open every second."

"What else is there to harm you?" asked Geraldine, anxiously.

"Snakes, my child; alligators, crocodiles, hawks, great fierce fish in the lagoons, and in the jungle there are wildcats that make no noise when they walk along the branches. Here in the North the hawks are always watching for us; so are the foxes. Don't you think we wood-ducks have a hard enough time without dodging the guns of Indoor folk?"

"Indeed we do!" cried the children, full of sympathy.

"We do no harm," said the wood-duck; "we eat wild rice and other seeds when we're on shore; in the water we grub up the tender

roots of water-plants, and we eat insects. It is true we are fond of beechnuts and acorns, but there are plenty of these for everybody, including small boys and wood-ducks. Besides, we don't go in big flocks; we travel south with our children and come north in March and April all alone."

"But why in the world do people try to shoot you?" asked Peter.

"Because we are, I understand, very good to eat," said the wood-duck, chuckling. "It enrages the mallards and the canvas-backs when we tell them that we are quite as good to eat as they are. And it's so—in fact, any duck that doesn't eat fish is good to eat. When canvas-backs eat fish nobody can endure their flavor; and if a black duck or a red-head confines itself to a diet of wild rice and buckwheat, nobody could tell the difference between them and a rice-fed canvas-back."

"I shouldn't think you would care to talk

about how you tasted to other people," said Geraldine, with a shudder.

"Oh, we don't worry about anything," said the duck, carelessly. "It's rather a matter of pride with us that we really are as good to eat as those flat-headed, bull-necked, blue-footed canvas-backs, who are always boasting about their position in the most exclusive society. If I'm to be shot and eaten, at least it will be a comfort to me, as I lie in the platter all trickling with delicious gravy, to know that there is not a duck in the world which is better worth cooking than I am."

The wood-duck rose upright in the water and whipped the air with its splendid wings.

"My wife will be anxious to hear all about you," he said, "so I must say good-night, children."

"Give her our love!" cried the children, as the duck darted up with a whispering whir,

circled once in the sunset glow above the trees, then turned due north, winging away so swiftly that in a second or two it had dwindled to a dark dot in the evening sky.

For a while the children sat in silence, drying their feet in Peter's fresh handkerchief. Then they slowly drew on their shoes and stockings. The sun was dipping so low behind the purple Mayfield hills that only one glowing edge remained like a rim of fire against the sky. And, as they looked, it vanished, and the low hills turned a darker blue, and the sky overhead grew pink and gold.

"Go to bed! go to bed! go to bed!" croaked a surly old bull-frog from the reeds. "Scoot! scoot! scoot!" hooted an owl from the darkening alders. "Good-bye! good-bye!" wailed the phœbe-bird from the old foot-bridge, as the children joined hands and moved slowly away through the meadow.

Dusk fell over river and thicket; against the

deepening sky the trees in the orchard stood out clear and dark.

"Come again! come again!" whispered the little gray moths swarming around them through the tall grasses.

"We promise," murmured the children. "Good-night, little moths."

When at last they reached the hill-top, Geraldine stopped, laying her hand on Peter's shoulder.

"Hark!" she said; "something is singing down there in the dark."

They listened, heads turned; and far away, stealing out of the velvet dusk, they heard the voice of the stream singing the faint, sweet songs of River-land.

ORCHARD-LAND

A

CHILDREN'S STORY

PETER and Geraldine sat in the hammock under the old apple-tree, swinging and singing like two young birds on a breezy bough.

In Outdoorland everything sings a song that is the oldest song in the world. The birds sing it, the winds sing it, the rivers sing it. All the little creatures of the fields sing it through the long summer days; but no two living beings

Copyright, 1902, by Robert W. Chambers

sing it alike. The robin sings it in his way, the golden oriole in his way; the south wind's voice is gentle and low, the north wind's voice is high and piping; the mountain brook's song is not like the song of the meadow brook, low, whispering through minted meadows; nor do the pines sing like the maples or the poplars.

But it is the same song—the oldest and most beautiful song in the world—whether chirped by August crickets in the wheat, or droned from high tree-tops by cicadas, or hummed among lilies by brown wild bees.

And the song is called "The Joy of Life."

"Peter," said Geraldine, "isn't it nice to know that all the world loves us, and that we need not be afraid of anything down here in the orchard?"

Peter, who had suddenly ceased singing, did not answer. His eyes were fixed on a clump of tall grasses half-way up the slope.

"What are you looking at, Peter?" asked Geraldine.

"There's something in the grass," whispered Peter, "and it's moving."

Geraldine took tight hold of Peter's hand and sat up very straight in the hammock.

"Is it a wild animal?" asked Geraldine. "Oh, look! It is brown and furry. Oh, Peter, do you believe it could be a bear?"

"I—I don't know," whispered Peter, swallowing hard. "See here, Geraldine, I thought we were not to be afraid of anything. I thought everything loved us in Outdoorland."

"Bears love little children," whimpered Geraldine.

"That's a different kind of love," began Peter, horrified. "Look at it! It's a brown cat! Who—who's afraid of a kitty-cat!"

A brown animal, about the size of a cat, suddenly sat up in the grass and stared at the chil-

dren, then dropped on all fours and came running towards them.

"Don't you come any closer," cried Peter. "If you do I'll—I'll run, and so will Geraldine."

The little brown animal popped up on his hind legs again, peering at them over the tops of the clover, and sniffing at them with wrinkled nose.

Then, all of a sudden, he broke into a furry laugh and slapped his sides with two short forepaws.

"Why, children, I'm only a woodchuck!" cried the fat little animal, shaking with laughter. "Don't tell me that you took me for a bear."

"But we did," said Geraldine, breathing very fast.

"Do you really and truly think I look like a bear?" inquired the woodchuck, delighted.

"Well, you are furry and brown, you

know," began Peter, looking very hard at the creature.

"So I am! So I am!" said the woodchuck. "Now you mention it, I believe I do resemble a bear. Mercy! What's that?" And up he popped on his short hind legs, blinking and sniffing in all directions.

"I thought I heard a noise coming," said the woodchuck, peering about. "As I was saying, I don't wonder that I frightened you and Geraldine. I suppose I'm rather a fierce-looking fellow, after all. Would you like to hear me chatter my teeth?"

"Oh no," said Geraldine. "But thank you very much for offering to."

"I'll just chatter 'em once," said the woodchuck, "just to show how fierce I am."

"Couldn't you manage to chatter one tooth? That will be quite sufficient, you know," urged Peter.

The woodchuck looked doubtful. "Chatter

one tooth only? Well, I'll try," he began, then broke off with: "My goodness! What's that noise?"

"I didn't hear any noise," said Peter, listening.

"I hear a cow-bell; that's all," said Geraldine.

"You seem to be timid," suggested Peter.

The woodchuck looked deeply mortified.

"You have discovered my secret, Peter," he said. "I am not the fierce creature I appear to be. I am so timid that every sound startles me, and I sit up to see it and smell it."

"How can you see a sound?" asked Geraldine.

"Or smell one?" added Peter.

The woodchuck shook his head. "I don't know," he said, "but I'm always expecting to see a noise; and if I ever do I'm sure it will frighten me half to death. Hark! What's that?"

I THOUGHT I HEARD A NOISE COMING,' SAID THE WOODCHUCK "

"I—I gave a little sneeze," admitted Geraldine, "and I beg your pardon."

"I never saw a sneeze," said the woodchuck, much interested. "I'm sure I'd die of fright if I ever did see one. Don't do it again. Will you, Geraldine?"

"No; I'll try not to," said Geraldine. "But you can't see a sneeze, you know; a sneeze is only a sound."

"I don't understand how you can hear something that you can't see," said the woodchuck, scratching his short, round ears. "And that's what frightens me about noises. If I could once see a noise perhaps it wouldn't scare me so much. As it is, I spend half my life sitting on my hind legs trying to see the noises I hear."

"Why do you want to see them?" inquired Peter.

"So I can run away from them," said the woodchuck, earnestly. "Half my life is spent in running away."

"Are you very unhappy?" asked Geraldine, gently.

"No, there is a kind of fearful pleasure in running away," said the woodchuck. "I practise it every few minutes so as to be perfect in time of need. You know I live in a burrow on the hill. Well, I sit up on the hill-side waiting until I hear a noise, and when I hear a noise I try to see it, and when I find I can't see it I am so frightened that I run to my burrow and pop in, and lie there, delighted, because the noise I heard didn't catch me. It's a life of happy escapes and triumphant shivers."

"Tell us all about your life," said Geraldine, emboldened by the woodchuck's timidity. And she slipped out of the hammock and knelt down beside the furry little thing, stroking its sleek back with gentle fingers.

"You are about as large as a middle-sized cat," she said, "and your tail is stumpy, and

your head is something like a squirrel's head; and, oh, what short legs you have!—and what funny yellow eyes with dark centres! You are certainly a queer little thing."

The woodchuck squatted down in silence, buried in meditation.

THE WOODCHUCK

"CHILDREN," said the woodchuck, thoughtfully, "I am such a queer creature that sometimes I believe I am a genius. I was fashioned to live on the ground, but I can climb trees if I am obliged to. I'm painfully timid, but I can fight like a demon when cornered. I prefer a high, dry hill-side for my exercise, but I can swim like a rat on occasions. I hate cold weather, yet

I sometimes stay underground for weeks during warm weather, and come out in February when there's deep snow. I'm sure I don't know why I make such a fool of myself, either. I must be a genius. Would you really like to hear the story of a genius?"

"Oh, please tell us all about it!" cried the children.

"It's a brilliant career," said the woodchuck -"a thrilling chapter of hair-breadth escapes from noises—a tale of eternal flight from the unknown. Listen, little Indoor Children," and the woodchuck sat up on his hind feet and rubbed his nose and ears. All his five wits are in his nose and ears.

"You must know, first of all," said the woodchuck, "that I am of so much importance in the world that men have given me several kinds of names."

"I have three names; so has Geraldine," said Peter.

"You must be of great importance in the world," said the woodchuck, respectfully. "So am I. One of my names is Marmot, another is Gopher, another is Ground-hog. Then I have another name, formed of two beautiful Latin words, *Arctomys Monax*, which is certainly romantic. But I like best to be called Chucky. Geraldine, will you call me Chucky?"

"With pleasure," replied Geraldine, politely; and the sentimental woodchuck thanked her with emotion, and continued:

"There are three kinds of woodchucks in the United States, all cousins. My kind is sometimes brown, like me, sometimes light gray, sometimes yellow, sometimes foxy red, and sometimes even jet black."

"How funny!" cried Peter.

"Why?" asked the woodchuck, mildly. "Some people have brown hair, some yellow hair, some black hair, and some red hair. It's

the same with woodchucks, and I can't see anything very funny about that."

The children waited; the woodchuck sat up to see if he could see a noise, sniffed for a few moments, then rubbed his ears and nose, and continued:

"I was born in April, in a hole in the ground, and mother said I was an extremely handsome baby with fur like pin-feathers.

"I remember one warm day in May when I heard a noise for the first time in my life. I was hopping along between some bushes and a stone wall, watching father and mother, who were busy in a field of tall grass, when all of a sudden I heard a most frightful noise, and then another."

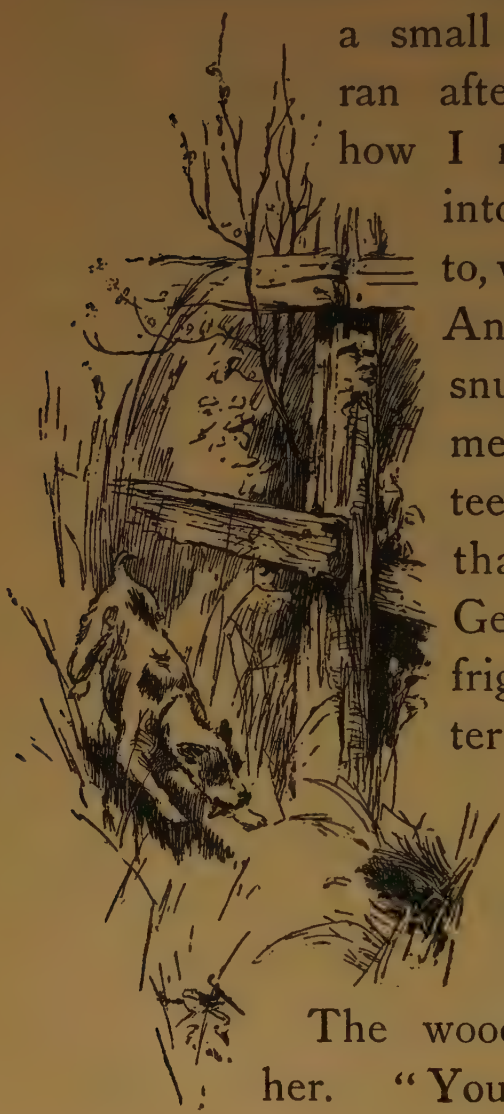
"What kind of a noise?" asked Peter.

"It went bang! and then bang!" said the woodchuck.

"That was a gun!" cried Peter, excited.

"So an old, gray woodchuck told me after-

wards. I started running. A man called out, 'There's another! Take him, Snapper!' And a small black-and-white dog ran after me, barking. Oh, how I ran. Then I tumbled into the first hole I came to, which was under a fence. And the small dog came snuffing and sniffing after me, but I chattered my teeth and gave him a nip that set him howling. Geraldine, if a dog ever frightens you, just chatter your teeth and bite his nose."



"But *I* couldn't do *that!*" cried Geraldine, shuddering.

The woodchuck misunderstood her. "You couldn't do it with-

out practice, child. But it is easy after a while."

There was a silence. The woodchuck sat up to see a noise. Geraldine clasped her hands and shook her curly head.

"Why do you shake your head?" asked the woodchuck.

"I shouldn't like to live in a hole in the ground," she said.

"Why not?"

"There are no windows, and it's dark and damp. How in the world do you manage to see?"

"Can't you see when it's dark?" asked the woodchuck.

Geraldine shook her head.

"Then how do you know it's dark if you can't see that it is dark? Can you hear the dark? Can you touch it? Can you taste it?"

"But—" began Geraldine, bewildered.

"Perhaps you can smell the dark? Is that

it?" asked the woodchuck. "Now I can smell better than I can see. Let me show you." And the woodchuck began sniffing around through the grass.

"I smell a nice, juicy root down there," he said, presently, and fell to scraping up the earth with his fore-paws and pushing it aside with his furry nose. And presently he laid bare a white, juicy root which he began to nibble.

"Have a bite, children?" he inquired, munching away with his mouth full.

"No, thank you," said the children; "we don't eat roots."

"You ought to try an onion, or a beet, or a turnip, or a carrot, or a potato—"

"But we do eat all those vegetables," they cried. "Are they just the roots of plants?"

"Something like it," replied the woodchuck, with his mouth full. "They are better than this artichoke I'm eating; but there are so

many noises around men's gardens that I hate to go and dig there."

The woodchuck scratched his whiskers.

"Geraldine," he asked, anxiously, "do you think I'm very fat?"

"Not too fat," she said, politely.

"Too fat? I didn't know anybody could be too fat," said the woodchuck, astonished. "My one and only object is to get to be the fattest woodchuck in the world."

"Why do you want to grow so fat?" asked Peter, beginning to laugh.

"If I'm not fat how can I sleep all winter without eating?" inquired the woodchuck.

"Good gracious!" said Geraldine, in astonishment. "Don't you eat in winter?"

"How can I? The ground is all frozen so hard that even if there were any roots to eat I couldn't dig through the ice and snow to reach them."

"But what in the world do you do, you

poor little thing?" asked Geraldine, sorrowfully.

"Do? I eat every minute while summer lasts, and I grow as fat as I can. Then, before the snow comes, I go down into my burrow and curl up into a soft, warm, furry ball, and bury my nose in my stomach, and shut my eyes, and go fast asleep."

"But what do you do when you wake up?" asked Peter.

"I don't wake up till spring."

"Do you sleep all winter?" demanded the children, excitedly.

"All winter long. And I live on my own fat. But, oh, Peter, how thin and hungry and shabby I am when I awake in the spring!"

"If you'll come to our door we'll give you a basketful of potatoes," said Geraldine, ready to weep at the thought of a hungry creature in the world.

"Thank you," replied the woodchuck, sitting

up to see a noise. "It is well meant, children, but I shouldn't dare to go near your house. There are so many noises around houses. They might catch me before I could see them. When I was small, owls and hawks and foxes and dogs were my enemies; now I can whip them, or run into my burrow until they go away. But who can whip a noise? And who can escape from a noise?"

"Did you ever try stopping your ears with your fingers?" asked Peter. "Mamma sometimes does it to escape the noises we make."

"I didn't know that one could escape from a noise without running away," said the woodchuck. And he covered his little round ears with his paws. "Am I moving, children?" he asked, anxiously.

"No, no!" cried the children, shouting with laughter. "To escape isn't always to run away."

"Running away is the only kind of escape I

care for," said the woodchuck, disappointed. "I thought, perhaps, if I stopped my ears I'd begin to slide away like lightning. I see that I shall have to depend on my legs, as the other animals do."

"Other animals? Are there other animals around here?" asked Geraldine, cautiously.

"Why, of course!"

"Not savage animals?" inquired the children, anxiously.

"Savage? No, indeed. They're all friends of mine, and I hope you'll be as nice to them as you have been to me, because they're all polite and well bred. There's the fishing family who lives down by the brook—Mr. and Mrs. Mink and the children."

"Oh!" cried the children, "our mother wears a mink boa."

There was a strained silence.

"My friend the otter," said the woodchuck,

with a shiver, "resides near the river. He, also, is in the fishing business. There is a raccoon who inhabits the swamp beyond the woods —a very elegant and particular person, for he wears rings on his tail and never eats anything before he has carefully washed it in the brook. A weasel family keeps an apartment in that stone wall beyond the orchard; three courteous musk-rats have built a hut out of reeds in the swamp; some red squirrels and chipmunks, rabbits and white hares live in your beech-grove; and with them my visiting-list ends, though a family of skunks has moved into a pile of brush

in the wood-lot, but nobody cares to meet skunks socially."

Geraldine's eyes were round as saucers.

"It is dreadful—I mean it is most interesting—to know that our house is surrounded by wild animals," she quavered.

"They are our oldest and best families," said the woodchuck. "They will be very glad to call on you, because I shall tell them that you do not set traps or fire guns, or keep a dog at your heels."

"I have a cat," said Geraldine.

"I'll tell the weasels, and the squirrels, and the chipmunks," said the woodchuck, gravely. "Personally, I'm not afraid of a cat, but the widow wood-mouse attributes her affliction to a cat, and if cats take wood-mice, they will not stop at chipmunks or squirrels.

"And now," said the woodchuck, sitting up and holding out a friendly paw, "good-bye, little Indoor Children. This is my busy day, you know."

"I did not know you were engaged in business," said Geraldine, shaking his paw very gently.

"I am engaged in the business of getting fat for the winter," said the woodchuck. "Good-

bye, Peter. I'd ask you to call, but the burrow is so small I'm afraid you couldn't creep in."

"I'd like to try," said Peter, eagerly. The woodchuck waved his paw and sat up in the long, deep grass, murmuring: "To think that I have been mistaken for a bear! I'll tell all my friends of that—I will, indeed. I am greatly obliged to you for being frightened, children."

"Bow-wow-wow!" barked a distant dog in the woods.

"My goodness!" gasped the woodchuck. "What a dreadful noise!" And before the children could move or speak the woodchuck had vanished with a wriggle of his short, furry tail.

"Where in the world did he go?" cried Geraldine.

"Pooh!" said a clear, tiny voice above them. "That silly old woodchuck is afraid of his own shadow."

The children looked up very quickly.

The Dragon-fly

CAN'T see anything," said Geraldine. "Peter, what do you see? Is there anything on top of my head?"

"Don't move," whispered Peter. "There is a large, green dragon-fly seated on top of your head."

Geraldine sat perfectly still and screamed.

"Stop that shrieking," snapped the dragon-

fly. "I'm a visitor, and it isn't good manners to shriek when a visitor comes to call on you."

"It isn't good manners for a visitor to sit on his hostess's head," said Peter, indignantly. "Get off, or I'll hit you."

The dragon-fly spread his glittering wings, whizzed around Geraldine's head once or twice, and then alighted on her knee.

"Do you mind if I sit in your lap?" he asked. "If you do, say so, for I don't want that brother of yours to attack me."

"Visitors usually sit in chairs," said Peter.

"Fiddle!" said the dragon-fly. "If I sit in a chair I must stand on ceremony; and I'm too tired to stand on anything. I've been on the go since sunrise—chasing gnats, and flies, and mosquitoes."

"It is very polite of you to call on us when you are so tired," said Geraldine.

"Oh, I'm rested now," said the dragon-fly, briskly. "Come, children, what can I do

"'DON'T MOVE,' WHISPERED PETER"

for you?" he added, rubbing his fore-feet together and looking from Peter to Geraldine out of his great, glassy, green eyes.

"Did you really come here to do something for us?" asked Geraldine, surprised and touched.

"Yes, I really did. Guess what it is."

"There's a hole in my stocking," began Geraldine. "Perhaps you came to darn it."

"Rubbish!" cried the dragon-fly, angrily, and made a faint, clashing noise with his wings. "Do you think a warrior, a hero like me, darns little girls' stockings?"

"I didn't mean to make you angry," said Geraldine, timidly; "but you know some people call you a darning-needle."

"Some people," retorted the dragon-fly, wrathfully, "had better mind their business."

"Please do not clatter and buzz with your wings; you really frighten us," said Geraldine, soothingly.

"Well, to be called a darning-needle is enough to enrage any hero. Isn't it?" muttered the dragon-fly. "I haven't a needle in my tail, and I haven't even a sting in my whole body. I'm neither a wasp nor a mosquito. All I can do is to bite."

"Gracious! Can you bite?" exclaimed Peter.

"Oh! My bite couldn't hurt you," replied the dragon-fly, recovering his good-humor. "It might startle you and pinch you a little, but you could scarcely call it a bite. It would be more like a pinch."

"A poisonous pinch?" asked Peter, deeply interested.

"No, no!" said the dragon-fly, impatiently. "There's nothing poisonous, or mean, or underhand about me. I'm a warrior and hero, and fight a fair and square fight. Any butterfly or mosquito will tell you that, much as they hate me."

"Tell me about your battles," said Peter,

eagerly. "I love soldier stories. Are you a soldier?"

"Well, I'm all kinds of a soldier, and all kinds of a sailor, and I'm a submarine, too. Do you want to hear the gory story of my life, Geraldine?"

"Y—es," said Geraldine, uncertainly, "but too many battles may frighten me."

"Oh, I won't scare you," said the dragon-fly. "You see, I was sailing around in the air, looking for gnats and mosquitoes, and I heard that animal boasting how you had mistaken him for a bear—"

"You mean our friend the woodchuck?" asked Peter.

"Yes; he has no sense. I thought that, perhaps, you might like to hear the life-history of a real, true hero."

The dragon-fly clattered his wings in derision and rubbed his fore-legs together.

"Now for a story worth listening to," he

said, proudly. "I was born in the water. What do you think of that, Geraldine?"

"And you didn't drown?" exclaimed Peter.

"Drown? Nonsense! My mother, a beautiful lady dragon-fly, laid a bunch of small, yellow eggs on the stalk of a reed, about two inches under water. To make sure that we eggs should not float away, she glued us tight to the stem."

"How big were you when you were an egg?" asked Geraldine.

"About as big as a grain of sand," said the dragon-fly. "After a week or two we eggs all hatched into tiny, fierce creatures with six legs, no wings, and a pair of hungry jaws. We were fighters from the first, my brothers and I. Why, a few days after I was born I had a terrible battle—"

"Tell us all—don't skip anything!" cried Peter, wriggling with excitement.

"Oh, that battle was soon over," replied the

dragon-fly. "I was walking around under water, looking for trouble, when I saw a fat wiggler jerking about near the top of the pond. Do you know what a wiggler is, Geraldine?"

"I've seen them in barrels full of rain-water," said Geraldine. "I don't like them."

"That's the kind. Those wigglers turn into mosquitoes, and I hate mosquitoes," said the dragon-fly. "So I swam up to that wiggler, and, after he hit me with his tail, I gave him a bite with my jaws. My jaws do not open and close like yours, Peter, but they work side-ways, like scissors. I cut that wiggler in two!"

"Oh, dear!" cried Geraldine, sorrowfully. "Didn't it hurt that poor little wiggler?"

"Hurt? I don't know. We insects have no nerves like yours, and we don't suffer pain as you do. The wiggler looked surprised to see himself in two pieces, but before he could reprove me, I swallowed both pieces—snap! snap!—quick as a wink."

"You ate your enemy!" cried Peter, astonished.

"I always eat them," replied the dragon-fly, viciously. "I've eaten millions of wigglers that might have turned into mosquitoes and bitten you and Geraldine till your arms and legs and faces were covered with red spots! I think you ought to be much obliged to me."

"We are," said the children, respectfully.

"You're welcome," said the dragon-fly. "I'll come up to your house some day and clear the mosquitoes from the veranda."

"Why do you always fly around streams and ponds?" asked Geraldine.

"Well, partly because there are more flies and gnats and mosquitoes around ponds than anywhere else; partly because our wives come to lay their eggs under water. You see, before I had this fine set of wings I lived under water for eleven months. Part of that time I was an egg, part of the time a larva, as I ex-

plained to you—a hungry, quick, active creature, roaming over the bottom of the pond, fighting wigglers, and eating 'em, too. I ate thousands in my day—big, fat, rich wigglers."

"Didn't you have a stomach-ache?" asked Peter.

"No; but once I had a most terrible backache. I'll never forget that backache, nor another one just like it, a month or two later. I was walking about, looking for trouble, one day, when suddenly this dreadful backache seized me. Oh, how it hurt! I thought my back would certainly split open. And what do you suppose happened?"

"I once had a splitting headache," said Peter.

"Did your head split open?" asked the dragon-fly.

"Oh no! Heads don't do that."

"Well, my back did," rejoined the dragon-fly, triumphantly.

"Oh, dear!" cried Geraldine. "How in the world did you mend it?"

"I didn't mend it," said the dragon-fly. "When my back split open I simply stepped out of my skin, leaving the old shell behind me. I was a pupa then, but my appearance had not changed very much, except that I had a pair of little scaly pads on my back, called wing-pads, like the wings of little chickens before they grow. But I was bigger and hungrier and fiercer than ever."

"Did you eat more wigglers?" asked Peter.

"Millions! I also attacked water-beetles and tore them to pieces. Once I rushed at a very small fish and bit him till I had eaten him to the backbone."

"Suppose," began Geraldine, timidly — "suppose you skip that part of your life."

"I don't like to," said the dragon-fly. "It was a glorious time I had there in the pond. I tore things up, I can tell you. The little

minnows called me a water-tiger, and fled from me every time they saw me prowling over the bottom of the pond.

"One day that dreadful backache returned. I was miserable and restless; I couldn't keep still; it seemed as though I couldn't endure being under water."

"Perhaps your bath of eleven months was not good for you," said Peter. "Mamma says it is not wholesome to stay too long in the water."

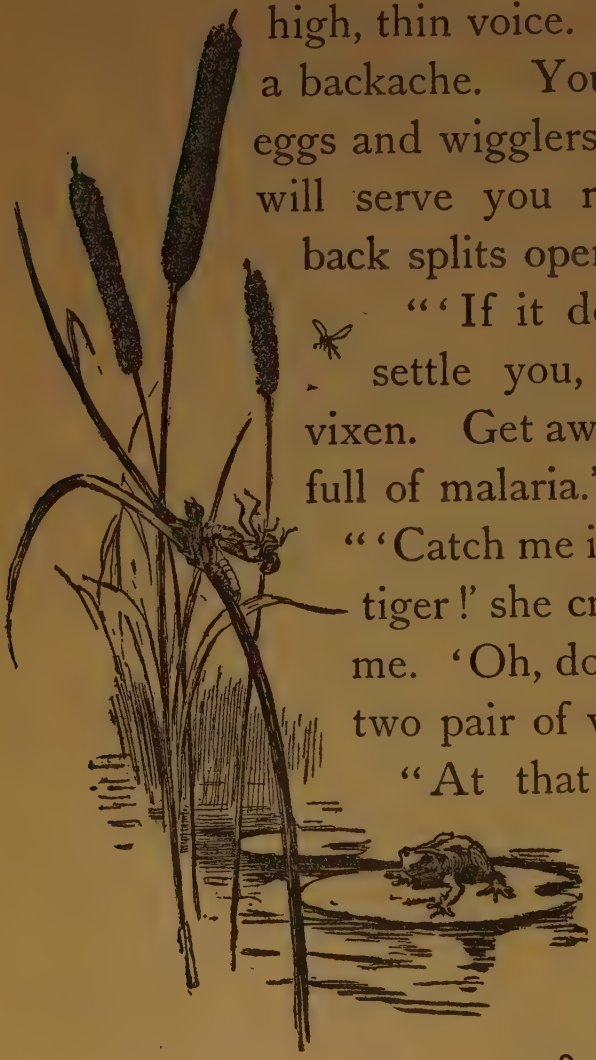
"It wasn't good for me," said the dragon-fly. "So I climbed up the stalk of a cat-tail reed until I came to the top of the water.

"It was a bright, sunny day. I had an idea that it would do me good to hang on to the cat-tail and bask in the sun. So I hooked my six sharp claws into the fibres of the stem, and hung there, about a foot above the surface of the water.

"A lady mosquito came humming around

me, and I stared at her out of my round, bulging eyes.

"'You naughty creature!' she cried, in a high, thin voice. 'I'm glad you have a backache. You've eaten up all the eggs and wigglers that I ever laid. It will serve you right if your wicked back splits open.'



"'If it does,' I groaned, 'I'll settle you, you stinging little vixen. Get away from me. You're full of malaria.'

"'Catch me if you can, you hateful tiger!' she cried, flying all around me. 'Oh, don't you wish you had two pair of wings to catch me!'

"At that moment I gave a jerk and my back burst open.

"'Oh, my!' screamed the mosquito.

'There's a dragon-fly crawling out of your back!'

"And there was—a beautiful, slender, green dragon-fly, with glittering wings all wet and crumpled. Children, the dragon-fly was I."

"What did you do to that mosquito?" asked Peter, eagerly.

"I was too new and weak to fly at once," said the dragon-fly; "but by late afternoon the sun had dried my wings, and," he added, slowly, "before night I had dined on three hundred and thirty-seven plump mosquitoes; and that lady mosquito was the sweetest and tenderest of them all. I forgive her every time I think of her."

"Do you never eat anything except mosquitoes?" asked Peter.

"I eat all sorts of soft, tender, gauzy-winged creatures. I can chase a butterfly, seize him in mid-air, snip off his wings, and chew him up before his wings have fluttered to the ground."

"Oh, dear," said Geraldine; "isn't there anything you are afraid of?"

"Well, there's a bird—a dark-colored bird with white breast that some people call the tyrant-flycatcher and others call the kingbird.

"Now that bird has a silly and idiotic habit of chasing everything that flies, from a gnat to a hen-hawk. Understand me, children, I don't say that I'm *afraid* of a kingbird—"

The boastful dragon-fly stopped short and began to clash his wings irritably.

"What is the matter?" asked Geraldine, gently.

"Matter?" snapped the dragon-fly. "Somebody laughed at me."

"We did not laugh at you," cried the children. "We should never dream of laughing at such a brave hero as you."

"Well, *somebody* laughed," muttered the dragon-fly, sulkily. "Hark! There it is again! I won't stand to be laughed at!"

The children sat as still as mice, listening.

"Somebody is eavesdropping," declared the dragon-fly; "somebody is up in that apple-tree, prying and peeping through the branches."

"Who?" whispered the children, looking up over their shoulders.

"Who?" repeated the dragon-fly, scornfully —"who but an ill-mannered, inquisitive, impertinent, intrusive—"

A shrill burst of mocking laughter drowned the angry adjectives. The startled children leaped to their feet and stared up into the apple-tree.

The Blue-Jay

A BEAUTIFUL blue-and-gray bird, perched on a branch above, peeped down at the children with a pair of very bright eyes.

"Did *you* make all that noise?" asked Peter.

The bird on the branch went off into fits of laughter.

"Are you laughing at us?" inquired Geraldine, amazed.

"He's ridiculing me," said the dragon-fly. "Nobody but a blue-jay would dare jeer at a hero."

"Oh, my eye and tail-feathers!" screamed the blue-jay. "You a hero! Listen to this rusty old darning-needle!"

"I am a hero!" cried the dragon-fly, flying into a passion and darting and whizzing about like a streak of blue-and-silver lightning.

"Yarns! Yarns! Yarns!" chattered the blue-jay. "*You* a hero! Oh, my crest and claws! You're only a mussy-fussy old mosquito eater. Why, you're only a fuzzy-buzzy old bluebottle fly, and you know it!"

The dragon-fly flew into another passion, and darted and whizzed and whirled through the sunshine, lacing the air with streaks of fire.

"Oh, don't make him so angry!" pleaded Geraldine. "If he flies into another passion he'll wear his wings off."

"Oh, he can fly faster than that," said the blue-jay. "Want to see him? There's nothing flies so fast as a hero in full flight. Watch him!"

And, raising his harsh voice, the blue-jay squealed: "Look out! There's a kingbird coming."

Suddenly the air was empty where the dragon-fly had been.

"Where is he?" asked Peter, bewildered.

The blue-jay cocked his crested head thoughtfully and meditated a moment. "Well," he said, "as far as I can make out, that dragon-fly is now about six thousand seven hundred and eleven miles from here, and still going. By-the-way, Peter, have you a peanut in your pocket?"

"Yes, I have just one," began Peter, searching in his pocket—"at least," he added, "I *had* a peanut—"

"'DID YOU MAKE ALL THAT NOISE?' ASKED PETER"

"Ha! ha! ha!" shrieked the blue-jay. "Where is it?"

"I don't know," replied Peter, puzzled, turning out the linings of both pockets.

"Why, I stole it!" said the blue-jay, wriggling his wings and tail in delight. "I picked your pocket while you were listening to old goggle-eyes' stories. Ain't I a smart bird? Say!"

"I'll tell you what I think," said Peter, turning red.

"Well, tell me, then," said the blue-jay, as Peter paused.

"I think," said Peter, "you are a thief."

"Oh," said the blue-jay, much amused, "everybody knows that. But, bless your heart, children, we blue-jays can't help it."

"Can't you help being a little common, either?" asked Geraldine.

"No, we can't help that either," responded the blue-jay, cheerfully. "We are a vulgar lot; but we rather like it."

"Do you really like being vulgar?" asked Geraldine, horrified.

"Love it," replied the blue-jay. "Why, I haven't a decent trait about me; I'm impudent, quarrelsome, intrusive; I steal, I use violent language, I hate my neighbors, I bully every bird I can, and if the bird is too big to plague, I screech for the other jays and they come and we tease and torment our victim until we are too tired to continue the torment another second."

"Blue-jay," said Geraldine, with her eyes very big and round, "you are so blue and beautiful that I hope you are only joking."

"I am rather a good-looking chap," admitted the blue-jay, with a swaggering flirt of his tail. "By-the-way, let me tell you a trick we jays play on those solemn, stuffy, waddling hens in your barn-yard.

"You see, every time they hear a hawk squealing up in the air, those hens squawk and run as fast as they can under the barn.

"So the other day I went off by myself and practised screaming like a hawk, and I managed to imitate a hen-hawk so closely that nobody could tell the difference. Then I got some friends of mine—"

"Blue-jays?" asked Peter.

"Of course. Other birds never associate with us; and we're glad of it. As I was saying, I got some friends of mine, and we all went up to your hen-yard and hid in the big maple-tree under which your hens were pecking and clucking and scratching and ruffling.

"Then I squealed like a hen-hawk. I thought my friends would fall off their perches to see the hens run. Oh, my, how I did laugh!

"And then old Phelim called out: 'Phwhere's me goon? There do be a hawk around the hins. Roon f'r me goon, some wan!'"

"I was there," cried Peter. "Was that you crying and mewing like a hen-hawk?"

"Of course it was," screamed the blue-jay, delighted. "Wasn't that a funny joke?"

"It is rather funny, but rather cruel," said Geraldine. "It is not very clever to frighten poor, harmless hens."

"Oh, pooh!" said the blue-jay. "That wasn't very wicked. I do wickeder things than that. Once we all got around an old owl whom we caught asleep in an oak-tree.

"He couldn't see very well in the daylight, you know, so we gathered in a circle and screamed and shrieked and teased and tweaked his feathers, taking good care to keep clear of his claws and beak."

The bird suddenly stopped talking and looked uneasily around.

"Go on," said Peter. "I hope the poor old owl caught one of you."

"He did," said the jay, in a horrified voice. "He gave a snap and gobbled up a poor, innocent blue-jay in about twenty swallows."

"This is a very dreadful story you are telling us," said Geraldine. "Haven't you anything pleasanter to say?"

"Pleasanter? I don't believe I have. You see, my life is made up of villanies."

"Weren't you once an innocent little egg?" asked Geraldine, hopefully.

"An egg? Oh yes. Mother laid six of us in a big, heavy nest. We were greenish-gray, with brown spots on us. We all hatched out in May."

"And then you were happy and good, weren't you?" insisted Geraldine.

"I was *never* good," said the blue-jay, with emphasis. "I was a greedy young bird. I tried to push one of my brothers out of the

nest so that there would be more room for me and more food."

"Oh, dear!" moaned Geraldine; "I cannot believe such things."

"Can't you?" asked the blue-jay, cheerily. "I don't wonder, for I'm a great liar and nobody believes what I say. If I can say anything to make mischief I say it. I love mischief. Whenever I hear a bird singing I begin to scream and screech to spoil his song. I drove a thrush almost frantic last June."

"Are you not ashamed?" asked Geraldine, almost sharply. "I think that somebody ought to turn up your tail-feathers and spank you."

"I got a terrible thrashing once," said the blue-jay, with a shudder. "I found a king-bird's nest and began to eat up the eggs and tear the nest to pieces. I had just swallowed one egg when—zip!—those terrible king-birds pounced on me and knocked me down and pulled out half my beautiful blue feathers

and pecked the crest off my head. Why, children, positively, I was ashamed to be seen with so few feathers to cover me. I shouldn't have cared so much if it had been the moulting season, in July and August, when most birds shed their feathers and hide away until they grow their new winter clothes. But I was a disgusting object, like a skinny chicken half plucked."

"Blue-jay," said Peter, solemnly; "did you ever do one single good deed in all your life?"

"Not on purpose," said the blue-jay. "But there is one habit of mine that does produce some good. You see, I have a custom of burying nuts and seeds, sometimes, meaning to dig them up and eat them when I am hungry. I bury them in the ground, to hide them from squirrels and chipmunks and other hungry creatures. But the worst of it is I have such a poor memory that I forget where I bury them."

"But how does that do good?" asked Geraldine.

"Why, these nuts and seeds, being buried, sprout and grow into trees. Without meaning to, I plant barren soil with pretty trees, which give shade and shelter to birds and animals and man."

"We are very much obliged to you," said Geraldine, sweetly.

"Oh, you're not at all welcome," jeered the blue-jay. "I'm a bad bird, and I don't want to be good. There's really only one other bird that is as bad as I am."

"What bird is that?" asked Peter, innocently.

"A jail-bird!" shrieked the blue-jay, burst-

ing into unearthly shrieks of laughter at the old, old, blue-jay joke.

"Peter," said Geraldine, mildly, "I do not care for the society of this bird any longer."

"I'm tired of you, too," said the blue-jay, frankly. "I'll just scare you, Geraldine, before I go. Look out! There's a big green caterpillar on your frock!"

"You can't frighten me," said Geraldine. "I don't believe that there is a big green caterpillar on my frock."

"Look and see! Look and see!" screamed the blue-jay, derisively, spreading his blue-and-black and grayish-white-tipped wings, and sailing away through the orchard.

"I won't look," said Geraldine.

But she did.

And there *was*.

"GERALDINE," said the big, green caterpillar, in a softly fat and silky voice, "I am very much obliged to you for not screaming when you discovered me walking on your dress."

"You are welcome," said Geraldine, faintly; "but would you be kind enough to walk off again?"

"I will, Geraldine; I will get off as fast

as I can. I will do it in a sort of sinuous waddle. But please don't hurry me. I am fat and short of breath. I am obliged to move slowly."

Geraldine sat still while the big, green caterpillar travelled towards the hem of her frock. Peter picked a long grass stem and looked at the caterpillar.

"O fat, green worm," he said, "what would you do if I poked you?"

"I'll tell you what I will do if you don't poke me," said the caterpillar.

"What?" asked Peter.

"I'll tell you more about caterpillars in ten minutes than you have learned in ten years."

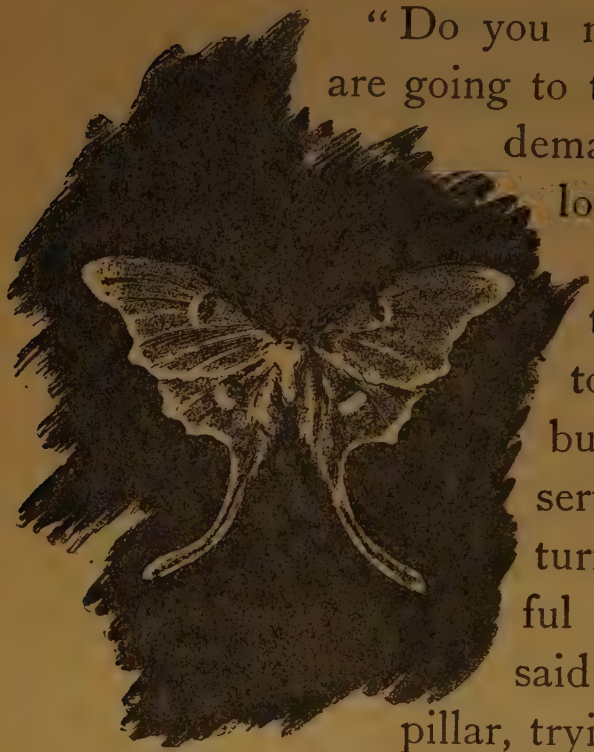
"Ho!" cried Peter, "I know all about worms. Tell me one thing about big, green worms that I don't know."

"Well," said the caterpillar, walking off Geraldine's frock and toiling along the edge of the hammock, "for one thing, I am a *cater-*

pillar, not a *worm*. You didn't seem to know that."

"What is the difference?" asked Peter, taken aback.

"One difference is that caterpillars turn into moths and butterflies, and worms do not."



"Do you mean to say that you are going to turn into a butterfly?" demanded Peter, incredulously.

"No, I do not mean to say that I am going to turn into a butterfly, but I do venture to observe that I am going to turn into the most beautiful moth in the world," said the big, green caterpillar, trying to speak modestly.

"A large moth?" asked Geraldine, opening her eyes wider.

"Almost as large as a bat," said the caterpillar; "a moth with great, pale-green wings and a fluffy body as soft as silk and as white as snow. And I shall have my fore-wings bordered with brownish purple, and my hind-wings adorned with two long points like tails. My feelers, which are called antennæ, will be amber color and fringed like tiny ferns, and my eyes will glow sometimes like rubies, sometimes like purple amethysts."

"How beautiful!" sighed Geraldine, in rapture; "it is so strange that such a lovely moth should come from such a—"

"What?" asked the caterpillar, pleasantly.

"It would be rude to say what I was going to say," explained Geraldine, flushing.

"Geraldine," said the caterpillar, "I believe you think I am homely, and I believe that you are afraid of me."

"You know," said Peter, "that you look poisonous. Are you?"

"Nonsense!" said the big, green caterpillar. "There are no poisonous caterpillars in the United States. There are just two kinds of caterpillars, cousins of mine, whose smooth, green-and-brown bodies are covered with little green, branching spines. If you should pick up one of these caterpillars, the spines would sting you exactly the way nettles sting, and the smarting might last for a few minutes. But, except these two caterpillars, who, by-the-way, turn into two very beautiful kinds of moths, no caterpillar in North America can injure you in the slightest."

"Not even the fat, green ones?" asked Geraldine.

"Not even the fat, green ones."

"And do they all turn into beautiful moths?"

"Not all; some change into butterflies."

"I'd like to know," said Peter, "the difference between butterflies and moths."

"Butterflies," said the caterpillar, "fly by day; moths fly by night. Butterflies, when resting, close their wings above their backs; moths spread them level or sloping on each side of the body. The feelers of butterflies are slender and have little knobs on the end; the feelers of moths are like tiny ferns sometimes, sometimes like delicate, pointed threads. The caterpillars of moths spin webs of silk around them before they change into the pupa, or chrysalis, out of which the moth is to be born; the caterpillars of butterflies do not. There are exceptions to all these rules. I know a moth that flies by day and looks like a bumblebee. I know another that flies in bright sunshine and looks like a swallow-tail butterfly. I know a butterfly whose caterpillar spins a web around the pupa. I know caterpillars of moths that do not spin webs or cocoons, but burrow down into the ground and turn into the pupa, or chrysalis, in the earth."

The children listened with mouths open.

"You see," said the caterpillar to Peter, "that, after all, there are some things you did not know about caterpillars."

"I see," said Peter, turning red.

"And I think there are a few other things, too," said the caterpillar, slyly. "For instance, I began life as an egg which a lady luna-moth laid on the under side of a walnut-leaf. Out of that egg, which was about the size of a pinhead, came a tiny, dark caterpillar scarcely a quarter of an inch long. I was that caterpillar!"

"What did you eat?" asked Peter. "Walnuts?"

"No, only the walnut leaves. Peter, I have already eaten eighty-six thousand times my own weight. I have in my body nearly four thousand tiny muscles. A thousand muscles aid me in walking; the others are concerned in eating and digesting. Is there anything

more, Peter, that I can tell you about caterpillars?"

"Do you sleep?" asked Peter, respectfully.

"Oh yes, usually by day."

"How do you breathe?"

"Through my sides. I have a row of tiny holes along my sides through which I breathe."

"Do green moths or butterflies come from green caterpillars always?" asked Geraldine.

"No, the color of the caterpillar has nothing to do with the color of the butterfly or moth. The brightest and prettiest colored caterpillars often make the dullest-colored butterflies or moths."

"I've been wondering," said Peter, "how you manage to eat so much. When I eat a great deal I am not happy afterwards. I have pains. Do you?"

"Oh no. You see, I am obliged to do all my eating while I am a caterpillar. By-and-by I'll turn into a chrysalis—a smooth, brown,

shiny, egglike thing, resembling a small, polished pecan-nut. I shall have no mouth to eat with, nor any food inside my web of silk, where I shall lie all winter."

"All winter?" cried Peter.

"All winter long, waiting for those wonderful changes to take place within me which will one day turn me into a great, soft, green luna-moth."

"And when will the moth hatch out?" asked Peter.

"In June."

"Then I suppose you'll flit around and sip honey from the flowers in our garden, won't you?" said Geraldine. "Oh, please do! We both invite you."

"I shall have no tongue to feed with," said the caterpillar, sadly. "Most moths and butterflies sip honey from flowers through long, slim, threadlike tongues. But neither I nor my relatives have tongues. As I told you, we

never eat except while we are caterpillars. So you see, Peter, we eat all we can before we turn into the chrysalis out of which the moth is to be born, for we can never eat afterwards."

"Oh, please don't waste any time, then," cried Geraldine, anxiously. "Please begin to eat right away."

"I must travel down the slope to the walnut-tree first," said the fat, green caterpillar. "I can't eat anything except walnut leaves."

"But how in the world did you come 'way up here in the orchard?" asked Peter.

"An accident," said the caterpillar. "A little while ago I was sitting on a walnut leaf, changing my skin, which had grown too tight, when a blue-jay sailed up into the walnut-tree, seized me out of pure mischief—not because he wanted to eat me—and flew across to the apple-tree. I was terribly frightened, but the blue-jay dropped me in the apple-tree, screaming with delight.

"'You're too fat,' he cried. 'Eat apples and grow thin.' And here I've been all the morning trudging down the apple-tree to reach the grass so I could travel over to my walnut-tree and get my breakfast."

"You poor, harmless, good-natured thing!" said Geraldine, tenderly. "Shall I carry you back to your walnut-tree in my apron?"

"It would save me a long journey, and I'm very short of breath," said the caterpillar. "I'm sure I'd be vastly obliged to you, Geraldine. Wait! Don't let Peter pick me up; it might pinch me and injure my future luna-moth. I'll just walk into your apron, if I may."

The caterpillar started down the edge of the hammock towards Geraldine's apron, which she held out, raising a corner in each hand.

"There are all kinds of big, green caterpillars," continued the caterpillar, plodding along the hammock-edge. "There's a big one that lives on tomato vines, potato vines, and

tobacco plants. He goes into the ground and lies quiet all winter as a chrysalis. He comes out in spring a great, gray, humming-bird moth, with orange spots on his body, and spends his time whirring around sweet gardens at dusk.

"Then there's a green-and-white one that lives on the ash-tree near your front door. He makes a lovely, olive-tinted moth marked with rose-color and white. Then on my walnut-tree there's a large caterpillar which wears four horns on his shoulders. He makes a big, handsome moth, tinted like an autumn leaf.

"On the maple-tree near me are green caterpillars with coral-colored beads on them. They spin cocoons of silk shaped like hammocks, and in the spring they will come out as huge, bat-like moths marked with gray, cream-color, and orange-red. Then—but I am getting short of breath. Hold your apron still, Geraldine, if you please."

Geraldine held the apron very still. The

caterpillar walked into it and curled up, talking all the while:

"Carry me carefully, children, and dump me down on the grass at the foot of the walnut-tree. I can find my way up all right.

"As I was saying, I'm going to spin a web in a few days. I'm really a kind of silk-worm caterpillar. All my cousins spin good silk, which can be made into silken gowns. I spin a rather poor quality, and so do my cousins the Promethea and the Cynthia, but the Polyphemus is called the American silk-worm moth, and his caterpillar spins first-rate silk—"

"Excuse us for interrupting," said Geraldine, gently, "but here is the walnut-tree. Shall we drop you here?"

"Yes, please; and thank you, children, very much for your kindness to a fat, old, ugly, green caterpillar. I'll remember it. Some moonlit night before the lamps are lighted in your house and you two little Indoor Children

"'YOU WILL SEE A MOTH FLUTTERING AGAINST THE PANE'"

are pressing your noses against the nursery window, looking out at the stars, you'll hear a soft thud outside the glass and a sound of delicate wings.

"Then you will see a lovely, green moth, fragile and exquisite as a moonbeam fairy, fluttering against the pane.

"It will be your old friend, the big, green caterpillar, come to bid you good-night before you go to sleep. "Drop me gently, Geraldine."

Geraldine dropped the caterpillar on the grass. Immediately he began to climb up the walnut-tree.

The children watched him quietly until he was lost among the leaves in the branches above.

"He is much kinder and gentler and more polite than the blue-jay," said Geraldine, regretfully. "I shall never again be afraid of a homely caterpillar."

"I don't think he is homely," said Peter. "He is such a beautiful, transparent green—the color of a green grape. I wish he had stayed and told us some more."

"More!" cut in a high, thin voice beside them. "Why, that caterpillar can't begin to tell you the wonderful stories that I can."

The children looked carefully all around them, but could not see anything.

"I wonder what that was!" whispered Peter.

"My name is Vespa," continued the high, thin voice. "Sit down by the brook and I'll join you in a drink."

"Mamma does not allow us to drink out of brooks," said Geraldine, looking everywhere to discover where the high, sharp voice came from.

"Well, sit down, anyway, and I'll be kind enough to introduce you to myself and to my cousin Sphex."

"But we can't see you or your cousin," cried Peter, bewildered.

"Just keep your eyes fixed on that ripe apple lying there half buried in the grass," said the high, thin voice.

The Wasps

PETER and Geraldine sat down cautiously in the long, sun-warmed grass and fixed their eyes on a ripe, red apple which lay near the edge of the brook.

Some ants were crawling over it. After a while Geraldine said, timidly, "O small black ants, was it you who invited us to sit down here?"

"No," said the ants, in little, squeaky voices; "we are much too busy to invite anybody to

sit down anywhere." Still listening, the children heard them calling to one another: "Hurry! Hurry! There are thousands of things to do before sunset!"

After a while Peter said, politely, "Excuse me, O ants, but do you know anybody named Vespa or anybody named Sphex?"

"They're relatives of ours," answered the busy ants, "but we really haven't time to talk about them." And they cried to one another, in little, squeaky voices: "Hurry! Hurry! There are millions of things to do before sunset!" They all scurried over the apple, carrying morsels of the fruit, and hastened away across a sandy pathway, calling out to one another: "Hurry! Hurry! or the ant-lion will catch you."

"O ant!" cried Peter, as the last insect came toiling along, carrying a bit of apple several times as big as himself, "haven't you time to tell me what is an ant-lion?"

"It's a dreadful creature that lives in a pit in the sand," replied the ant. "If an ant ventures along the side of the pit, the ant-lion throws sand over him till he tumbles down to the bottom. I haven't time to talk—"

"Oh, please tell us what happens to the ant if he tumbles into the pit?" pleaded Peter.

"The ant-lion eats him," shouted the ant. "I haven't time to chatter with children, I tell you." And he hurried on backward, dragging the big piece of apple along behind him.

"Peter," said Geraldine, "there is a wasp on that apple."

"Now you need not run away," said the wasp, in a high, thin voice, "because I'm not going to sting you unless you interfere with me."

The children knew that voice.

"Why, you are Vespa!" exclaimed Peter.

"Of course I am. What do you think of

"'PETER,' SAID GERALDINE, 'THERE IS A WASP ON THAT APPLE'"

me?" said the wasp, turning slowly around in the sun until the bright yellow stripes on his black body glittered like gold.

"You're pretty," said Peter, slowly. "Where do you keep your sting?"

"In my tail," said Vespa, carelessly, and settled down on the apple to make a light luncheon.

"Are you really a relative of those small, black ants?" asked Geraldine.

"I suppose I am," replied the yellow-and-black wasp, "but I let them claim it. You see, I'm of royal blood, and those ants are very proud of their relationship."

"How are you related to royalty?" asked Geraldine, respectfully.

"On mother's side. My mother is a queen-wasp of the Vespa family. Wait until I have washed my face and feelers, and I'll tell you about my birth."

And the brightly colored wasp sat up on

four legs and scrubbed his face and short feelers with his two front legs.

"As I was saying," continued the wasp, "my mother the queen, having slept all winter under a pile of leaves, woke up in April and decided to build a palace."

"Out of what?" asked Peter.

"Out of paper and silk. Mother first selected a site under a rock which hangs over the brook, just below the orchard. Then she flew to an old, weather-beaten fence, gnawed off a mouthful of rotten wood, chewed it up into a paste, and began to build under the rock.

"First she built three saucer-shaped cells out of the wood-pulp, which, when dry, was like thin, gray paper.

"In each of these cells she laid a little, round egg, which gradually became oval in shape.

"Then mother built, on these three saucer-shaped cells, a row of six-sided cells, laying

an egg in each one, and adding story after story to the nest."

"So it began to look like a honey-comb," said Peter.

"Yes, very much, only the cells were not built of wax, but of paper; and the three saucer-shaped cells were lined with silk.

"Over all these cells mother built a shelter of paper, which at first looked like a small umbrella, but when the nest was finished it was as big as a football and about the same shape.

"When I was hatched I was a small, soft, whitish grub with a big head and hungry jaws. Mother fed me, first chewing up the food to make it soft for me."

"What did you eat—oatmeal?" asked Geraldine.

"Sometimes mashed-up vegetables, sometimes mashed-up insects. And after I had been stuffed on this diet, I spun a little bag of silk in my cell and turned into a pupa."

"Like the chrysalis of a moth?" asked Geraldine, remembering what the friendly, big, green caterpillar had told her.

"Not exactly, but something like it. A few weeks later I hatched out into a handsome, yellow-jacket wasp."

"I thought," said Peter, "that wasps lived in swarms together."

"Some wasps do; others live all alone. My cousin, the big, golden-red, sand hornet, lives a solitary life; we Vespas, of which there are over nine hundred kinds, live in colonies. We are called 'social wasps.'

"When I hatched out I found several dozen brothers who had already hatched out of eggs which were laid before I was laid. A dozen or so other brothers hatched when I did. And others kept hatching all the time from cells which my elder brothers helped mamma build."

"Didn't you help, too?" asked Peter.

"Oh, of course. I chewed up so much

rotten wood to make paper of this morning that I was thirsty, and so I came down to the brook to drink and to get a little luncheon."

"Do you eat only fruit?" inquired Peter.

"I eat all kinds of ripe fruit. I prefer it a little over-ripe. I eat honey from flowers, too. I often catch flies and eat them. Sometimes I catch a butterfly, too.

"But I'm not such a great hunter as my cousin Sphex. She is a famous sportsman. You must hear her tell sporting stories—"

"I beg your pardon," said Peter. "I just wanted to ask you why you do such a mean thing as to sting little boys."

"My dear Peter," said the yellow-jacket, "whenever little boys discover a nest of yellow-jackets they throw stones and destroy the wonderful and beautiful palace that we all have labored so faithfully and so tirelessly to build.

"Why should we wasps not defend our homes and try to drive those boys away?

"Only suppose that a mob of giants should hurl rocks at your house, where all your family sat peacefully together. Would you not defend your home and those you love?"

"I'd try," said Peter, frowning.

"So do we try," rejoined the wasp, "and," he added, coolly, "we sometimes succeed. I remember a plump, fat boy I once stung— But excuse me, Peter, that story would perhaps be painful to you. I'll call my cousin Sphex, who lives in a hole in that sandy path. Wait. I see her coming now."

The children turned their eyes to the sandy path that lay hot in the sun, and they saw a large, reddish hornet alight on the sand with a deep, ominous buzz.

"That's my cousin Sphex," said the yellow-jacket wasp, proudly. "Don't be alarmed, children. She won't harm you if you don't annoy her. Isn't she a big one?"

"Does she sting?" asked Peter, cautiously.

"Sting? Whew! Well, I should say so. But I'll just tell her who you are, and it will be all right."

The yellow-jacket wasp raised his thin, high voice, calling: "Cousin Sphex! Here are two little In-door Children who would like to make your ac-quaintance."

"Which end of me do they desire to meet?" growled the big hornet, turning around.

"Now don't be ugly," said the yel-low-jacket. "Peter and Geraldine are good children, and you know it, be-cause the old apple-tree told all the Out-door Folk not to be afraid of these good little chil-dren. Let me introduce them."

"How-de-do, children?" said the Sphex hornet, with a deep buzz. "I'm busy digging a nest, but I can talk to you while working. If you want to learn how to dig a hole, watch me."

The big hornet drove her powerful head into the sand, scooped out a hollow with her great jaws, scraped the sand away with her fore-legs, and pushed it still farther away, using her hind-legs.

She was certainly a monster, red in color, with golden fuzz covering her body. Once the children saw her seize a pebble in her strong jaws and drag it out of the hole by main force.

"What are you going to do in that hole?" asked Peter.

"Do? Lay an egg in it, of course. Do you think I'm digging for fun?"

"I dig for fun," observed Peter.

"I don't," said the Sphex, shortly.

"Tell the children all about your fresh-meat patent," urged the yellow-jacket.

The great hornet backed out of the hole, which already was nearly three inches deep.

"I don't mind telling them," said the hornet, "because they have no stings, and they can't copy my process of preserving meat and game.

"You see," she added, turning towards the children, "I lay an egg in that hole when I have dug down six inches. That part is easy; but the question arises, when that egg hatches into a hungry grub, what is it going to eat?"

"Mashed grasshopper?" asked Geraldine.

"Not at all; that's what Vespa feeds his brothers. Now, I can't stop to wait for my egg to hatch; I have other holes to dig and other eggs to lay. I can't kill a grasshopper or bee or beetle or caterpillar and drop it into the hole, because by the time the egg is hatched my infant would have meat unfit to

feed on. What do you suppose I do to keep meat fresh for the baby grub?"

"Salt it?" asked Peter.

"Salt your grandmother's tabby-cat!" growled the Sphex. "No, I don't salt it; but this is what I do: I hunt around until I see a big, fat grasshopper. Then I swoop down, seize him, and sting him on the back of the neck, just where all his nerves are centred.

"He falls motionless, as if struck by lightning—not a kick, not a jerk.

"Then I pick him up, fly to the hole where my egg lies, and drop him in. There he will lie stunned, utterly paralyzed, alive but unable to lift a leg to escape. He will keep fresh and alive for six weeks—time enough for my egg to hatch and my infant to find plenty of nice fresh meat all ready waiting."

"Poor grasshopper! How horrible!" cried Geraldine.

"There's nothing horrible about it!" said the Sphex, sharply.

"Isn't it dreadful to eat a thing alive?" said Geraldine.

"Why? You eat raw oysters, don't you?"

"Are oysters alive when you eat them raw?" cried Geraldine, shivering.

"Of course," said the Sphex. "So are grasshoppers when my baby eats them." And she fell to digging with renewed vigor.

"I'll say good-bye," observed the yellow-jacket. "I have to chew a lot of wood into paper-pulp before sunset. We're improving our property with a new row of cells. Good-bye, children. It was an honor and a pleasure to have met me? You are quite welcome. Be careful how you disturb the bank of the brook under that big rock down there by the willow. *We* live there, and, if disturbed, we are likely to go mad and sting anything we see."

"We promise not to call on you at your house," said the children, hastily. "Good-bye, Vespa."

They turned to say good-bye, also, to the Sphex, but she had already dug down her six inches and had buzzed away to hunt insects to place in cold-storage for her baby.

The Chipmunk

A LARGE, yellow grasshopper, who was sitting on a spike of early golden-rod, called out, in a shaky voice, "I say, Peter, which way did Mrs. Sphex fly?"

"I think she flew down the brook," replied Peter, looking carefully around to see who had spoken. "Oh," he added, "I see you now."

"Do you?" said the grasshopper, sulkily. "I took particular pains to sit on a yellow

flower, because I myself am yellow, and I thought that I matched the golden-rod so closely in color that nobody could see me."

"Don't you want anybody to see you?" asked Geraldine.

"No, I don't. Everybody is after me to eat me. If I take a nap in the grass, a hornet is likely to seize me, or a lot of ants come biting at my six shins, or a bird tries to swallow me, or a snake comes sneaking, or a tiger-beetle attempts to tear me in two.

"It's most annoying, I tell you. All the fish in that brook swim about watching me, waiting for some unlucky jump of mine to land me on the water.

"I was talking to a big, fat frog a few moments ago, and he was bitterly complaining that all the creatures in the world were in league to make a meal of him.

"And what do you think! I hopped down

to the ground to sympathize with him, and the miserable glutton made a snap at *me!*"

The yellow grasshopper jumped down from his perch on the feathery spray of golden-rod.

"Foxes eat me, cats eat me, everything tries to dine on me—"

"*We* don't!" cried Geraldine, making a wry face.

"Oh, I don't know about that," muttered the grasshopper. "Men eat me in Africa. You would, too, if you knew how good I am. Why, one day—"

But the yellow grasshopper never finished what he had been about to say, for a small, striped animal leaped at him, and the poor grasshopper took one frightened jump which landed him clear across the brook.

"Who in the world are you?" exclaimed Peter, as Geraldine stepped back with a little cry of surprise.

The little animal sat up in the grass and looked at them with wide-open and very bright eyes.

His ruddy fur was striped with brownish-black and white; his throat and stomach were white; black-and-white stripes curved around his eyes, and his tail was furry but not bushy like the tail of a squirrel.

"I nearly caught that old, yellow-legged grasshopper, didn't I?" said the little animal, briskly. "My! Did you see him jump, Geraldine?"

"Are you a squirrel?" asked Peter, curiously.

"Of course not!" said the little animal, bursting into a chuckle; "I'm a chipmunk. Didn't you know it? Squirrel, indeed! No, thank you. I don't care to live in a tree on cold nights."

"'OH, I DON'T MIND,' SAID THE CHIPMUNK"

"Where do you live?" inquired Geraldine, "and will you come and sit on my knee, you pretty little thing?"

"Oh, I don't mind," said the chipmunk, running up to Geraldine, who had seated herself upon a flat rock. "You'll let me go again, won't you?"

"We wouldn't harm you for anything in the world," cried Geraldine.

"And we wouldn't put you in a cage and make you spin round and round in a wire wheel," added Peter.

"Oh, I knew you were not cruel to helpless creatures," said the chipmunk, cocking his head and looking around with perfect composure.

"Geraldine, you asked me where I live. I live in a hole in the ground. Some people call me a ground squirrel, others a hacker, others a chipmuk, and still others a chipmunk. So there you are, children. Take your choice.

It's purely a matter of taste and doesn't bother me."

"Does anything ever bother you?" asked Peter, smiling.

"Oh, the red squirrels chase me sometimes. Owls and hawks bother me a little; foxes sometimes try to dig me out of my burrow. I can get away, as a rule. But there's one thing I don't like, and that's a snake. Snakes never play fair. If they once catch the eye of a chipmunk, it's good-bye, chip."

"Can't you run away?" asked Geraldine, pitifully.

"No use if a snake fixes his eyes on yours. You can't seem to stir."

"I wonder," said Peter, "what you were going to do to that yellow grasshopper — if you had caught him."

"Why, just exactly what a snake would do to me if he had the chance," said the chipmunk,

cheerfully. And he winked at Peter and smacked his lips.

"Do you eat grasshoppers?" inquired Geraldine. "I'm astonished at you."

"Why? Because I eat insects now and then? Don't you ever eat meat?"

"Y—es," admitted Geraldine, "but I eat fruit and vegetables, too."

"So do I," said the chipmunk. "I eat nuts and grain and seeds. As a matter of fact, I eat almost anything that you eat."

"And you live in a hole in the ground like the woodchuck?" mused Peter.

"Yes; and I'm busy all summer and autumn storing up food for cold weather. Peter, look at my cheeks. Do you see anything peculiar about them?"

"Why, they're all puffed up as if you had a toothache!" cried Peter.

"They're puffed up because I have a hazelnut in one cheek, and the other cheek is

full of buckwheat. You see, I have two big pouches, or pockets, in my cheeks. In these pockets I carry nuts and seeds to my burrow. Squirrels have no pouches. That's the difference between squirrels and chipmunks."

"You look something like a squirrel," said Peter.

"I'm first cousin to the squirrels, and we quarrel all the while. By-the-way, did you know I had two mouths?"

"Where's the other?" asked Peter, astonished.

"Inside this one. This mouth which you see is furnished with four long, sharp front teeth, which I use to gnaw my way into nuts to dig out the sweet kernel.

"Behind these long front teeth I have some little teeth and a second pair of lips. With these I munch and chew the food that I dig out with my front teeth."

"I never heard of anything having two mouths!" exclaimed Geraldine.

"Well, perhaps I ought to say that my mouth has two compartments—the outside, or

gnawing part, and the inside, or chewing part, which is the true mouth.

"I don't see," continued the chipmunk, "why you should be so surprised. Cows have two stomachs. I know a cockroach who has ears at the other end of his body. I know

a grasshopper who has ears in his legs. I know a butterfly who has two bunches of eyes and whose nose is on the end of his feelers. I know another insect whose eyes are bigger than his head. Variety is the rule in nature, and you should never be surprised at anything."

"I can't help it," said Geraldine. "I'm always surprised at everything, and so is Peter."

"The only way to cure that," said the chipmunk, "is to sleep it off. Now, I'm always so surprised when winter comes and the first snow-flakes fall, that I go straight to bed in the bottom of my burrow and I sleep there for five months. When I wake up, it's spring-time, and I'm not surprised any longer."

The chipmunk sat up, scratched his nose, and yawned. "Excuse me, children," he said, "but I've had a busy day, and I'm sleepy. It's getting along towards sundown, and I'm

always up at sunrise. See how still and clear the sky is. Hark to the birds! They know evening is not far away, for they are all singing the evening song. The bats will be flying presently."

"The bats will be flying presently," repeated Geraldine, gravely. "A bat is a kind of bird, I suppose?"

"A bat," said Peter, "is a kind of moth, I think."

"Bats," remarked the chipmunk, yawning, "make me dizzy, and I don't care what they are. Good-night, Geraldine. Good-night, Peter."

"Come and sit on our doorstep and chip," said Peter, cordially, "and we'll feed you buns."

"No, thank you," said the chipmunk, "you keep a cat. I'm going. Just watch me whisk myself out of sight. Good-night."

The children rubbed their eyes.

"Where did that chipmunk go?" cried Geraldine.

"Hush!" whispered Peter; "here comes a bat!"

The Bat

IN the calm evening sky a bat fluttered, soaring, darting, dipping in soft, mothlike flight. The two children, with faces upturned, watched the winged creature.

"Invite him to talk to us," whispered Geraldine.

Peter called up to the bat: "O Bat, will you please come down and talk to us? I am Peter and this is Geraldine."

But the bat continued to soar and flutter and dart and dip.

After a while Peter said, "There is a verse we learned when we were very little—you remember, Geraldine?"

"Yes," said Geraldine, "the bat might like it. Let us say it to please him."

So the children took hold of hands, standing side by side in the first position in dancing; and, looking up at the bat, they recited together:

"'Bat, bat,
Come under my hat—'"

But they got no further, for the bat, darting downward with an angry squeak, hovered in front of them. The children, rather frightened, stood mute, hand tightly clasped in hand.

"Now I won't stand that sort of thing!" squealed the bat, in a passion. It's bad enough to have

"'Twinkle, twinkle, little bat'

written about me, and to be told I look like 'a

"SO THE CHILDREN TOOK HOLD OF HANDS"

tea-tray in the sky.' What do you want, anyway?"

"We only want you to talk to us," said Peter, astonished.

"Is that why you interrupt me at dinner?" demanded the bat.

"I don't know what you mean," said Peter. "How could you possibly be at the dinner-table when we saw you flying about in the sky?"

"Do you suppose I dine at a table?" squeaked the bat. "What did you think I was doing up there if I was not eating?"

"Eating what?" murmured Geraldine.

"Eating mosquitoes, midges, flies, moths, and occasionally a tender beetle. Didn't you know I ate while flying? Did you think I took those dipping, soaring, jerky flights for exercise? Has nobody told you that I am chasing insects which try to dodge me, and that's the reason I flutter about in such an eccentric manner?"

"Nobody has told us," said Geraldine, "and we are very sorry that we disturbed you while you were dining."

"Your apology," said the bat, "is accepted. As a matter of fact, I was swallowing a June beetle. The harder I swallowed the harder the beetle kicked. Then you called up to me. I said I'd be down in a moment, but you started to recite 'Bat, bat,' and I got mad."

"We didn't hear you say that you would be down in a moment," ventured Geraldine.

"Of course," said the bat, thoughtfully. "I forgot that sometimes my voice is so thin and high that in-door ears cannot hear it."

"Our doctor says that we hear perfectly," said Peter, uneasily.

"Well," replied the bat, "we'll just try. Listen hard, children, and tell me what you hear."

The children listened intently.

"I hear a katydid," said Geraldine, "and a cricket."

"I hear a katydid, and a cricket, and a whippoorwill," said Peter.

"Is that all?" asked the bat.

"Can you hear anything else?" asked Peter.

"Of course I can," said the bat. "I hear hundreds and hundreds of thin, fine-drawn sounds, delicate voices which your ears are not made to hear but which mine are. I hear the faint song of a deer-mouse from the darkening meadow. I hear the voices of scores of insects—voices so exquisitely pitched that the highest notes of the west wind are low compared to them."

"We didn't know that we couldn't hear everything," said Peter, soberly. "Our music, teacher says we have good ears."

"Can you hear," continued the bat, "the rustle of a small moth creeping over the golden-rod across the brook? I can. I hear the almost soundless footsteps of a tiger-spider on

the stone wall. I hear, deep in the earth, the stirring of a tiny grub eating soft, juicy roots. I hear, high in that apple-tree, the gentle breathing of a sleeping robin on his nest."

The children listened in silence. The bat, tirelessly hovering before them, went on:

"I have senses more highly developed than you. I have one sense that is denied entirely to in-door folk."

"What sense?" asked Peter.

"The sense of the *nearness* of things. I can fly like a flash through thickets of leaves so dense that scarcely any light penetrates, and I never touch a leaf or a stem. It is not sense or smell that prevents my tearing my thin, fragile wings against the briers of thorny thickets. It is an extra sense, the sense of nearness, for blind bats can dart through bramble thickets as easily as bats who have eyes."

"Are you a bird?" asked Geraldine, softly.

"The same old question!" sneered the bat,

angry again. "How many thousand times must In-door Children be told that I am as much an animal as a mouse is! Bats don't lay eggs. Bats have no feathers. Bats have no beak. And you ask me if I am not a bird!"

"Haven't you wings?" retorted Peter.

"Yes and no. What you call wings, I use for wings. Now, you In-door Children have two arms and two legs; we bats have two arms and two legs. My hand is my wing; my fingers are stretched out, and between the fingers is a delicate membrane. This membrane, or thin skin, stretches from my shoulder and elbow, and from between my fingers down along my sides to my short legs. That is what you call my 'wing.' I use it as a wing; so, after all, it doesn't matter what you In-door Children call it."

"Can you walk, too?" asked Peter, in awe.

"No; birds can walk, but I can't. Sometimes, when I'm on the ground, I can half flop,

half hop a little way. Many birds can swim; I cannot. I don't live in a nest, either; so there you are, Peter."

"Where do you live?" asked Geraldine.

"At night I'm on the wing. In daytime I hook one toe into a branch of a tree or a crevice of a rock and hang myself up like a dish-cloth."

"And sleep upside down?" exclaimed Peter, laughing.

"And sleep upside down," snapped the bat. "Do you know a better way to sleep?"

"If you sleep upside down the blood will rush to your head and make you an idiot," said Geraldine, anxiously.

"You children needn't sleep upside down to become a pair of idiots," observed the bat, darting off to catch a gnat, and returning presently to hover in front of the children as though suspended from the sky by an invisible wire.

"I wish I could do that," said Peter, wistfully.

"What?" asked the bat.

"Fly."

"Try sleeping upside down," said the bat. "Perhaps that was what made me so clever. Look at all the things I can do: I can fly; I can see in the dark; I can tell exactly how near I am to a thing without measuring the distance; I can hear sounds that you cannot; I can smell things that you cannot. If you and Geraldine will sleep hanging by your toes from the foot-board of your bed, perhaps you may grow double ears like mine."

"Have you double ears?" asked Peter.

"I have an outer ear and an inner ear. I have also a special organ called a nose-leaf, which, in some relatives of mine, is larger than their entire faces."

"A bat's face," said Geraldine, "is only about as big as a button, so you couldn't have much of a nose, you see."

"There's a bat in Java five feet long from

tip to tip," said the bat, quickly. "There's another bat in the Philippines with a nose two inches long.

"I am proud and happy to be a bat. The bat family is enormous; bats inhabit every portion of the earth except the north and south poles. The big fruit-bats, or flying-foxes, live in tropical countries; we little bats live north. Why, right here in this orchard there are four kinds of bats. There's my cousin, the silver-haired bat, darting about over the brook where the gnats are thickest; there's another cousin, the Carolina bat, flapping slowly over the meadow; then there's a beautiful golden-ruddy bat that often flies in broad daylight around the trees on your lawn. He's called the New York bat or red bat. New York bats are usually red, and often remain out till broad daylight.

"That makes three kinds of bats that fly here. I'm called the brown bat, and that makes four kinds of bats in your orchard. The New

York bat says that there are as many bats here as there are in the Battery itself."

"Is that why they call that part of New York the Battery?" asked Geraldine.

"So the New York bat tells me," replied the brown bat, thoughtfully, "but sometimes I suspect he imposes on us country bats."

"Now, children, one half of Outdoorland has gone to sleep and the other half is waking up. I must be going; my day begins with the night."

"Children," said a big, soft, sleepy voice behind them, "it is bedtime."

"Peter," whispered Geraldine, "I think the old apple-tree is speaking to us."

And it was.

BEDTIME

"O apple-tree," cried the children, in delight, "please, please tell us a bedtime story before we go!"

There was no reply. Through the twilight falling floated the whistling hunting-call of an owl; a gray hawk-moth whirred humming past, and hung like a shadowy bird before a blossom which swayed in the breeze stirred by the quivering wings.

The children listened, breathless; but there was no sound save the dull splash of fish rising in still pools and the far whisper of the shallows.

"O apple-tree," they pleaded, "please, *please*, just one little bedtime story before we go!"

A subdued rustle like quiet laughter swept through the clustering leaves of the old tree.

"I am sleepy," breathed the tree, stretching its limbs till they crackled faintly. "These young leaves of mine have no business whispering and tittering at this time of night; they'll wake the little, green apples, and then we'll have a hard time getting to sleep."

"Do trees sleep?" asked Peter, surprised.

"Trees need sleep as much as little In-door Children," said the apple-tree. "When the cool, quiet night comes, all trees are tired and ready for sleep. You see, light keeps us awake. If it did not, old trees like me might snatch an hour at noon for a nap; but no tree can sleep while the light lasts. Without sleep, a tree slowly but surely decays, and finally dies."

"Then," said Geraldine, very seriously, "we won't ask you to tell us anything to-night."

"I should nod with every bough and fall asleep in telling a story," said the old tree. "If

I were a sapling I wouldn't mind. But even saplings can't stand too much loss of sleep. Look what is happening to those young maples which were set out along the new street across the river."

"What is happening to them?" asked Geraldine, anxiously.

"They are wasting away from lack of sleep," said the apple-tree. "The new electric lights burn all night, and trees can't sleep in a bright light. Moonlight is bad enough, goodness knows; for when the full moon shines on my top branches, I'm restless all night, and those saucy little leaves get to whispering, and wake up the baby apples. Then the breeze comes visiting, and wakes the robins, who begin a sleepy twittering and cheeping and chirking that sooner or later is bound to start that big, yellow rooster in your barn. My, what a life I lead! Go to bed, now, like good children. There's scarcely any pink left in the evening

sky; every flower in your garden is in bed and asleep or nodding.

"Hark! I hear your mother calling you from the lawn!"

"But you will tell us some day how you grow tart, red apples on one bough and sweet, yellow apples on another bough, won't you?" pleaded the children, clinging to the rough bark.

"Yes," said the old tree, drowsily, "I promise you I will. Outdoorland loves you dearly. I shall dream of you out here under the moon."

"Children! children!" came a sweet voice faintly clear from the lawn above.

"Yes, mamma! We are coming very quickly," called the children, climbing the slope together, hand clasping hand.

Overhead the sky flushed deep pink in the afterglow, and through the rosy radiance a single point of light twinkled faintly and went out.

"A little star has gone to bed," said Geraldine. "Good-night, little yellow star."

"I'm not a star, I'm only a small firefly," came in a faint voice from above. "Good-night, children!"

And the tiny spark broke out again, drifted, glimmered, floating through dusky foliage, and finally went out in a last good-night.

THE END.